

takes at a high altitude must be judicious, so every word spoken by one in a position of leadership must be spoken in love, seasoned with salt, and fitly spoken, without personal bias. Ranting at people one has been assigned to lead constitutes a serious abuse of authority. Throwing a tantrum and striking objects in a fit of uncontrolled anger or frustration forfeits credibility. Choices carry consequences. And that is what this little walkabout Moshe is taking with the Holy One is going to be all about.

Paging Moshe!

I guess we all should have known that it was just a matter of time before he took his trusty rod in hand and started another ascent. He may not be as young or as spry as he once was, but that doesn't seem to stop him – at least not when the Voice of his old Friend beckons him to come. The prophet is suddenly nowhere to be found. He has left the rest of us in the camp and headed off toward the hills. And then again, *how could he resist?* The Most Beautiful Voice in the Universe called him, saying: ***Aleh el-har ha-Avarim hazeh*** - Numbers 27:12a. Moshe has quite a history with that Voice. He has learned to love that Voice more than wife, or children, or brother, or sister – indeed, even more than life itself. As a result, Moshe is a veteran of many such mountain-climbing walkabouts. Oh, the things His Friend has shown him in previous excursions and road trips! And oh, what things the Voice of His Friend has spoken to him during the course of his walkabouts on this world's mountains!

Why does the Holy One have Moshe hiking in the High Country again? His instructions were to climb the Avarim for a specific reason - ***Ur'eh et-ha-aretz*** – *i.e. and look upon/ behold/ survey the land*. Ah – so *this* is about *that*. First it was the daughters of Tzelofechad who got caught up in holy zeal for the Bridal Chamber the Holy One has prepared for us; now it is *Moshe's turn*. You see, Dear Reader, while Moshe has seen a lot of things – far more than most human beings will ever see - one thing he has never seen is *the land*. He has been hearing about the beauty of *Eretz Yisrael* all his life. He heard stories about it from his mother. He heard promises about it from the Holy One. He has thought about it, talked about it, tried to imagine it, and *longed for even a fleeting glimpse or a wisp of a scent of it*, for decades. He has dreamed about it a thousand times. But he has never - once even - laid eyes on it. He has never once known that special kind joy, or felt that unique sense of exhilaration and fulfillment. And so, one clear Moavian morning, as the men of the Redeemed Community were out gathering manna on the plain opposite *Ba'al Pe'or*, the One Who knew Moshe best and loved him most made him an offer he could not refuse - ***Ur'eh et-ha-aretz*** – *i.e. and look upon/ behold/ consider the land*. 120 years old or not, Moshe bolted at the opportunity. Wouldn't you? The land where his ancestors had walked with the Holy One, and where all their glorious stories of Divine Encounter and Covenant Interaction had unfolded; the

land where all humanity's dreams, aspirations, and hopes for a better future lie waiting like a betrothed bride for the arrival of her bridegroom; the land at the root of every Divine Promise, including the promise of Mashiach and *His Kingdom coming to earth as it is in Heaven* - is visible from the peaks of those mountains. Wild horses could not keep Moshe away. He has a smile on his face, a twinkle in his eye, and a lilt in his step that we haven't seen in a long time. And he has a really, really, really good and trustworthy Guide leading him on every step of this journey! Yea, *though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death*, he will fear no evil. He is about to be given a glimpse of 'home'. Whatever happens after that, he knows will be just fine.

Responding to the Great Bridal Callings

As stated in the Introductory Study this week, *Pinchas* is the parsha of the Five Great Bridal Callings. The parsha has five primary focuses, each of which is associated with a slightly different call of the Bridegroom of Heaven to His Bride. In the first few verses of the parsha the focus of the narrative was upon the special covenant relationship the Holy One established with Elazar's son Pinchas, whose act of zeal for his assignment to safeguard the sanctity of the *Mish'kan's* courts stopped a plague and brought about atonement for a great national sin. I described this part of the parsha as *the Great Call to Zeal for God's House*.

Quickly the focus of the narrative shifted to preparing the camp of the Redeemed for an imminent and bloody war with Midyan. I referred to this part of the parsha as *the Great Call of the Bridegroom for His Bride to Take up Arms*.

The focus of the parsha then shifted to the building hunger of those in the Camp to claim their inheritance in the land of the Patriarchs. The daughters of Tzelofechad provided a case in point. I referred to this part of the parsha as *the Great Call of the Bridegroom for His Bride to Possess the Land*.

It is time for the focus of our meditations and behavior to change again. We have reached a threshold. We stand on the brink of something radically wonderful. I call the next aspect of the all-encompassing Bridal Calling of the Holy One upon our lives the *Call to Let Go of the Past and Embrace our Bridegroom-King's More Glorious Plan for the Future*.

As Torah's spotlight falls upon the imminent transition in the earthly leadership of the Camp from the *rod of Moshe* to the *sword of Yehoshua*, we must decide if we are we going to embrace the glorious 'new' thing the Holy One has planned for us – or if we are just fine with the status quo.

Are You Ready to Embrace the Glorious ‘New’

Chapters close. Seasons change. Eras pass. Regimes rise ... and fall. Creation constantly renews itself. As soon as we become comfortable with the way things are they cease to be that way. The only thing we can count on enduring forever is the Covenant. About the time we mentally and emotionally ‘settle in’ to a season of life, the outer bands of the clouds that the Holy One sends to usher in the next season show up on our horizon. So ... are you seeing clouds of transition forming in front of your eyes? There is no point in fighting it. There is no sense denying it. We might as well accept it, embrace it, and do what we can to prepare for it. Are you preparing yourself and your household to welcome the ‘new’? Are you feeling the winds of transition beginning to blow? The Camp of the Redeemed is by no means exempt from these winds. As today’s aliyah of Torah makes clear, the atmospheric pressure of those winds is going to dramatically impact our camp not many days hence.

Moshe is 120 years old and has been told he will not be the one to lead the Camp of the Redeemed into the Promised Land. A change in leadership and direction is imminent. This is *life* - and this is *good*. The Holy One wants us to all be ready to step right out of the ‘old’ and into the ‘new’² that He has in store for us without a lot of trauma or drama. Understand, however, that with the Holy One, that which we see as ‘old’ and that which we see as ‘new’ are always integrally related, perfectly consistent, and best understood as merely two sides of the same coin. How can that be, you ask? How can the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ be merely two sides of the same coin? It can be – indeed must be – this way because the Holy One is *eternal*. That means He dwells outside of the realm of time. With Him there is no shadow of turning. He does not wake up in a new world each day. With Him there is no yesterday, no today, no tomorrow. From His eternal Observation Room He can clearly see all of what men think of as ‘time’ as occurring all at once. He sees all generations and civilizations as part of one continuous tapestry. Knowing the end from the beginning at all times, He confines all His relations with men to the furtherance of His one unchanging, unshakeable, unstoppable eternal plan of redemption.

² The word our English Bibles translate as ‘new’ is *chadash*. It does not in common usage mean ‘new’ in the English sense of never having existed before. In Hebrew thought there is nothing ‘new’ - in that sense - under the sun. The Hebrew adjective *chadash* describes something that has always existed but which has been acted upon by the forces of nature or time so as to initiate a fresh cycle of productivity. For example, each year a piece of wheat land produces a ‘new’ [i.e. *chadash*] wheat crop. Each month the same old moon enters a *chadash* phase. And each time a runner starts another lap around a track that lap is described as *chadash* even though it is pretty close to identical to all laps around the track that have ever come before. For the Redeemed of the Holy One therefore preparing for the *chadash* is not about *starting over* – it is just about making a few necessary adjustments to account for environmental changes.

To the Holy One things that mortal men like you and me – created beings who live in the constantly-unveiling world of time - think of as the “Old” and the “New” are the *exact same play* with all *the exact same themes*. All that changes in His eyes are *the names and faces of the actors* who play the roles of hero, villain, and supporting cast, the *background scenery*, and the *stage props*.

Here is a Biblical example to demonstrate what I mean. Avraham was called as the *prototypical hearer of the Voice of the Creator of the Universe*. He surrendered this role – and his shepherd’s rod - to Yitzchak. Yitzchak in turn surrendered that staff and role to Ya’akov. Ya’akov turned the staff and rod over to Yosef and Y’hudah. And on and on, *ad infinitum*. The Voice Who called all these men did not – indeed cannot - change. The message did not – indeed cannot - change. The calling did not – indeed cannot - change. The Covenant did not – indeed cannot - change. Only the earthly faces, names, places, obstacles and props change. In a similar way it is now time for Moshe to surrender the staff of authority and the role of *Friend of the Bridegroom and leader of the Camp of the Redeemed* to someone else. The Holy One knows who it will be; Moshe does not. The Holy One knows that the next link in the Great Covenant chain of *sh’ma*-people will be Y’hoshua. But He also knows that Y’hoshua will one day surrender the staff and role to judges like D’vorah and Gideon and Sh’muel [Samuel]. The judges, in turn, will one day surrender the staff and the role to prophets and kings like David and Solomon, Eliyahu, Elishahu, Yeshayahu, Yirmayahu and Yechezkiel. And the prophets and kings will one day entrust both the staff and the role to Messiah Yeshua and His appointed heads of government. But through it all, the Bridegroom will not – indeed cannot – change. The love of the Bridegroom for His Beloved will not - indeed cannot – change. The calling on the Beloved to return that love with passion and live according to His Ways will not – indeed cannot - change. Only the earthly faces, names, places, obstacles and props change. Different wallpaper; same wall; same pattern.

Letting Go of the Past

All that being said, what does ‘letting go of the past’ entail for those in Covenant with the Holy One? Let us consider that for a moment. First of all it almost always means *letting go of the comfort – or familiar pain - of some faces and names that have played very important roles in whatever chapter of earthly life is drawing to a close*. Letting go of the past means letting go of the people who have meant the most to us – for good and for evil, for pleasure as well as for pain. Picture Avraham packing provisions on a donkey to send out with Hagar and Yish’mael. Picture him later laying Sarah to rest in the cave of *Machpelah*. Picture Rivkah leaving her father, mother and brother to become the wife of a man she had never met and the matriarch of a nation beyond anything she could imagine. Picture

Ya'akov in a mad scramble leaving behind not only the twin brother with whom he has been in a life and death struggle since the womb but also the father who had blessed him despite himself and the beloved mother upon whom he would never lay eyes again.

Are there any people from the prior chapters of your life you need to release to the Holy One, Dear Reader? A parent? A sibling? A teacher? A best friend? A worst enemy? A lost love? A boss? A business partner? A client/customer/account. A pastor or priest or rabbi? A child? A grandchild? Is there in your life a Hevel [Able], or a Cham [Ham]; or a Lot or a Hagar or a Yish'mael; or a Yitzchak or a Sarah; or an Esav, a Lavan, or a Rachel; or a Dinah, a Yosef, or a Binyamin; or a Pharaoh or a Moshe, that the Holy One is calling you to 'let go'?

Stepping Out From the Comfortable Cocoon of the Familiar

Secondly for a Covenant Partner of the Holy One 'letting go of the past' frequently means being willing to walk away forever from familiar places and symbols in blind trust that the Holy One will provide fresh and more fulfilling places and symbols. Picture Avram and Sarai watching the skyline of the Mesopotamian village of Charan in which they had built their home grow smaller and smaller in the distance. Picture Yosef bound in slave-trader chains watching the distance between himself, the pit into which he had been thrown, and special garment his father had made for him grow longer with each stride of his captors' camels. Picture the multitudes of the Exodus generation seeing the tops of the pyramids of Egypt and the lush, green Nile River Valley disappearing over the horizon behind them as they strode forth to freedom.

Are there any places from your past you need to release? The house in which you grew up? The school you once attended? The fields and neighborhoods in which you played? The city in which you experienced your best – and/or worst – moments? The building in which you worked, or wed, or worshipped? The graveyards in which you have grieved?

Additionally for a Covenant Partner of the Holy One 'letting go of the past' usually means *moving on past familiar phrases that have through overuse become clichés instead of the revelatory communications they were when first heard*. We have, for instance, heard Moshe say ***'Let my people go'*** for the last time. As we move forward in Torah only three more times will we read the precious phrase ***'and the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...'*** We will never even once again hear him declare either ***"Arise O Holy One, let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You"*** or ***"Return, O Holy One, to the many thousands of Israel!"***

Are there any familiar phrases or clichés that the Holy One is calling you to let go of? Instead of releasing fountains of fresh revelation and wisdom from the Throne of Heaven do you find yourself repeating stale, second-hand phrases sprinkled with a few outdated religious buzzwords and overused memory verses? Instead of creative wisdom and problem-solving techniques from the Omniscient Creator do you find yourself speaking accusations, placing blame, rehearsing offenses, and making excuses?

Now, as the winds of change are blowing in the camp is the time to press on beyond clichés of religion, creed, philosophy, ideology and relative morality. It is the time to get over offenses and move on to future-based solutions instead of past-focused time-wasters like accusation, blame-placing, excuse-making, and point-counterpoint exchanges. It is time to be part of the great movement toward '*on earth as it is in Heaven*'.

And finally, for a Covenant Partner of the Holy One 'letting go of the past' almost always involves *moving on past some comfortable patterns of behavior* – some customary and convenient ways of thinking, speaking, doing things and/or reacting to people, events, and circumstances. Picture Avram trying to describe his relationship with Sarah to Avimelech of Gerar the same way he had described their relationship to Pharaoh. Picture Moshe at Meribah standing before the Rock from which the water poured forth with rod in hand, preparing to strike it as he had at Refidim. Sometimes we need to totally re-evaluate how – and why - we do things the way we do them. Worship is a good example. So is study. So is prayer. So are leadership, counseling, teaching, preaching, prophesying and every other form of 'ministering'. So it is with all behavior patterns, eating patterns, drinking patterns, conversation patterns, reaction patterns, and interaction patterns. Continuing to do things the same way we have always done them just because we have always done them that way is a trap door for staleness, for compromise, for settling for far less than the Holy One wants for us, and for missing out on the purpose and destiny for which we have been given the breath of life at such a time as this.

We are much, much more than the people and places and circumstances and behavior patterns that repeat themselves in the lives we have built for ourselves. We are *wonderfully designed, masterfully crafted, infinitely creative* spiritual beings. We each have vast untapped reservoirs of intelligence, talent, strength, and world-changing ideas and energies just waiting to be inspired and unleashed. Oh that we would heed the call of the Master to arise and live each day to the fullest, with wide-eyed wonder, leaping and running like calves released from the stalls!

Truth, Calling ... or Tradition?

But what about the role of tradition, you ask? Judaism has tons of it. Christianity has far more³. Some religions make holy war – or declare false peace – over it. Paganism is full of it. Materialism delights in it. Secular Humanism and *One-World-Order-ism* traffic in and thrive on it.

*At three I started Hebrew school. At ten I learned a trade.
I hear they've picked a bride for me. I hope she's pretty⁴.*

Meh. Tradition is not – cannot be allowed to become - an end in itself; though it often has much charm, and sometimes great substance, it is at best merely a means to an end. And in some cases the ultimate end that tradition leads to is far different than what its originators intended. A good picture of how this sort of thing happens is provided in the words of early 20th Century want-to-be sage Tevye, who famously said: *“Here in Anatevka we have traditions for everything ... how to eat, how to sleep, even, how to wear clothes. For instance, we always keep our heads covered and always wear a little prayer shawl ... This shows our constant devotion to God. You may ask, how did this tradition start? I'll tell you I don't know! But it's ... a tradition!”*

Tradition can be wonderful, connecting us with the Holy One in ways that our modern mind could not possibly think of - or it can function as a restricting, constricting, destiny-limiting prison wall that blinds us to our real calling, mission, and destiny. If we are not careful, traditions can actually obscure – if not displace - the God/Man Covenant as the center of gravity of our lives. Hence, all traditions need to be reviewed periodically. They need to be tested both for *Covenant consistency* and for *Cross-generational viability*. In some cases such a review will reveal that a particular tradition should be celebrated and revived with fervor. In other cases such a review may make it clear that a particular tradition – or a whole body of associated traditions - need to be discarded and exorcised along with the unclean spirits it/they rode in on. If a tradition connects us inextricably to the Words of the Living God and directs us toward the fulfillment of our destiny as His Covenant People, that tradition can be one of the sweetest, most valuable wells of wisdom we can ever find. But if and to the extent a tradition connects us only with dead men's bones and dead-end pathways, it is a poison cistern in which if we are not careful we will be buried alive.

³ Most of what is seen in ‘local churches’, as well as all ecclesiastical hierarchies and titles and orders of service, not to mention so-called pseudo-Christian holidays like Christmas, Easter, and St. Valentines Day, are not of Messiah at all, but are merely recycled, relabeled, and mainstreamed forms of pagan concepts, sacraments, holidays, and traditions.

⁴ This is one of the lines of the opening song from the play/screenplay “Fiddler on the Roof”, which is called simply ‘*Tradition*’.

Saying Farewell to the Rod of Moshe

Forty years ago as Moshe was stuttering his way through his first ever God-encounter the Holy One asked the exiled Hebrew “*Mah-zeh veyadeicha*” [*What is that in your hand?*]. Barefooted and shaking, the son of slaves responded “*Mateh*” [*a rod*]. The Holy One cast His eyes upon that simple shepherd’s rod that day, infused the power of His Creativity into it, and adopted it as His primary implement of change in the world. Since that day the Moshe’s rod has become the most powerful instrument on the face of the earth. For forty years every time Moshe has lifted his rod the natural realm of Created Order has stopped in its tracks and ... well, let’s just say when Moshe has lifted that rod *all Heaven has broken loose*.

In the last season, at the mere lifting of Moshe’s rod supernatural plagues brought the most powerful nation in the earth to its knees. In the era just concluded, the lifting of that rod caused the Sea of Reeds to divide in two. In the days of our fathers, the lifting of that rod brought about the release of streams of living water large enough to refresh over two million desert-parched souls every day for almost 40 years. But the appointed season in which all Heaven breaks loose on earth at the lifting of Moshe’s rod has drawn to a close. The debacle at Meribah⁵ about which we read in parsha *Chukat* constituted the final time Moshe’s rod play a part in the life – much less the governance - of the Covenant Nation.

Yehoshua will not carry a shepherd’s rod – he will carry a *sword*. Sh’muel will not carry a sword – he will carry a *horn of oil*. David will not carry a horn of oil – he will carry a *sling, a harp, and a crown*. Eliyahu will not carry a sling or harp or a crown – he will wear a *mantle*. And Yeshua, in His first appearance on earth at least, will not be identified with any of these things. He will carry *the fragrance from a broken alabaster box of precious oil*. He will take on the shame – or is the *honor* - of a hideous Roman device of capital punishment. He will bear scars in His hands, feet, and side. He will bask in the radiant brilliance of transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension to an exalted place on the Right Hand of Heaven’s Throne.

Are there any objects or symbols that you are holding onto but which have no life in them? A star – having either five points or six? A crèche? A crucifix? A piece of metal or wood or ivory or plastic in the imagined shape of a cross? Sometimes the objects we learn to venerate in one season of development serve no purpose whatever in the seasons that follow.

⁵ See Numbers 20:7-13.

The question therefore becomes, in the ‘new’ season that lies before us all, what shall we treasure and keep – and to what shall we bid a fond farewell as we leave it behind. And while we are on that subject and asking those questions, let us consider both the City of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

The Legacy of the Three Weeks

Speaking of tradition ... by tradition each year the 17th day of the fourth Hebrew month⁶ begins for us a three-week period⁷ of remembering the tragic destruction which befell the *Mik’dash* [Temple] by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and then again by Romans on the same day in 70 C.E. In this three-week period the focus of our meditation is our disconnection from the holy things of our King – especially the Temple, where the tablets of Torah resided and formed epicenter as our lives, and the holy city of Jerusalem in its finest hour:

*If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning.
If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—
If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

[Psalm 137:5-6]

The destruction of the First Temple – and the loss of the ark and its most precious of all contents, the tablets of Torah inscribed by the Finger of the Creator - is considered (with strong Biblical evidence) to have been a judgment of the Holy One upon the idolatry of the people of Yehudah [Judah], from its kings to its priests and its common people. The destruction of the Second Temple, which had no ark or tablets, and focused more upon the outer court, is considered (with strong historical evidence) a judgment of the Holy One upon the vicious infighting and Hebrew-on-Hebrew violence that characterized Jewish life in the time period of the life of Yeshua (and culminating in his death) and continuing up to 70 C.E. Idolatry – or baseless hatred of our fellow human beings; pick your poison, someone might say!

The desecration and destruction of first Temple deals with the breaking of the first group of the Ten Words of the Holy One (man’s relations with God). The desecration and destruction of the second Temple destruction deals with the breaking of the second group of the Ten Words of the Holy One (man’s relations with his fellow man).

In our haste to move on to the ‘new’, let us not let the lessons of the past escape us. As we enter upon the *Three Weeks*, let us to a ‘spiritual cleanse’. Let’s rid from our lives both *idolatry* and *bickering*. Let us pursue Our God with all our heart, and let His love empower us to forgive our brothers. Let us draw near to the Holy One,

⁶ The Three Week period begins on the 17th day of the fourth month of the Hebrew calendar – the month that the Babylonians called *Tammuz*.

⁷ The Three Week period ends on the ninth day of the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar – the month the Babylonians called *Av*.

and acknowledge every man, woman and child - even those who offend us - as His Creations, with Divine Destinies just as important as our own. And let us never lose sight of the promise of the Holy One through the prophet *Zechariah* [Zechariah], who said:

***This is what the Holy One of hosts says:
'The fast of the fourth [month], the fast of the fifth ...
will become joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Yehudah.
Therefore love truth and peace.'***
[Zechariah 8:19]

This season happens every year. Bad news seems to come from everywhere. People overflow with anger – or even violence - toward us. And sometimes, Heaven help us, we are tempted to respond in kind, or even do them one better. Nothing seems to go the way we think it should. Lashon hara rushes in like a flood. The bad guys seem to be winning every war. But it lasts for three weeks. And then life goes on. It is all part of the Creator's Plan - like 'summer and winter', 'seed-time and harvest', and a 'time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing'. This is the season each year when we have to be reminded that it is all about His Kingdom, not about our will being done 'on earth as it is in our opinion'. This is the season we have to reconnect to the truth that it is all about His Calling People Forth out of things they love but which are killing them, and not about our – or their – experiencing the immediate gratification of temporal pleasures, comforts, and conveniences. This is the season we get reminded once again that it is about His Wisdom, not our poison-fruit polluted sense of what is 'good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong', 'fair' and 'unfair', 'just' and 'unjust', and 'moral' and 'immoral'. And this is the season we get reminded that He is both a Wise King and the Fairest of Ten Thousand Bridegrooms – and that He is those things, and so much more, even in the midst of the three week period of peril we spend each year '*between the straits*'.

The real issue we need to face in this season is not what bad things are going to happen to us and the world during these three weeks. The real issue we need to face is how we are going to live our lives when whatever He allows to happen ... well ... *happens*. The real issue is how well we will succeed in keeping our thoughts, words, and actions actively engaged in passionate pursuit of our Bridegroom-King's Face and the members of our bodies energetically engaged in walking out His Words of Life in real time, in real life, in real situations, and in real 'straits'.

This season on the Calendar of the Most High is merely our appointed time to truly learn what it means to let Him lead us 'through the valley of the shadow of death', and yet fear no evil. Will we esteem His Rod and His Staff to be enough for us?

That is the real question that is posed by the annual period of three weeks ‘between the straits’.

We have a critical choice looming before us. Will our next season be just another season of *Eichah* [i.e. Lamentations] - or will it be a season of *Nechemyah* [i.e. Nehemiah]. Will we spend the upcoming season bemoaning what we have lost - or will we spend it clearing out the rubble, gathering the survivors, and re-building what we have been called and commissioned to build and maintain?

It is not up to the politicians, the movements, the institutions, or the media. It is up to us. Are we ready to get over, move on, and be the Temple? Or are we going to hold onto the wounds and scars of the past? Will we redeem the time – or wallow in it?

But I digress. Let’s check back in on Moshe, shall we? He is having a pretty important moment.

Moshe’s Next-to-Last Mountaintop Experience

Moshe has always been a *mountaintop kind of guy*. He ascended Mount Sinai multiple times to meet with the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven. It all started on the day of the burning bush. Later, after the Exodus, he spent at least 2 periods of 40 days apiece on that same mountaintop in the Cloud of the Holy One’s glory. He also stood on the mountain at Refidim with his hands uplifted in the midst of the Redeemed Community’s first war. More recently he has accompanied his brother Aharon to – and left him on - another mountain, called Hor. As today’s aliyah begins Moshe finds himself on yet another mountain – a mountain that will later be called *Nebo* [Hebrew, נֶבֹז]. This mountain is located on the Western Boundary of Moav. Once Moshe reached that location, and gazed across the Jordan Valley, letting his eyes drink in the majestic beauty of the land of the Patriarchs, the Holy One interrupted his reverie to remind him:

V’ra’itah otah v’ne’esafta el-ameycha

After you have beheld it, you will be gathered to your people

gam-atah ka’asher ne’esaf Aharon achicha

As Aharon your brother was gathered, so will you also be.

Ka’asher meritem pi b’midbar-Tzin b’merivat ha-edah

Because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Tzin, in the strife with the assembly

l’ha-k’disheini vamayim l’eyneihem

You did not sanctify me in their eyes re: the waters

[Numbers 27:12-14]⁸

⁸ See also Deuteronomy 32:49-52.

Fresh from the reverie of seeing the land for the first time, Moshe did not complain. He did not argue. He did not pout. His only response to the Holy One's announcement regarding his fate was to ask the Holy One to "appoint" a leader over the people – someone to take them into the Land of Promise in his stead. Specifically, Moshe prayed:

*Let the Holy One, the God of the spirits of all flesh,
Yif'kod ish al ha-edah [appoint a man over the community of witnesses],
who may go out before them, and who may come in before them,
and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in;
that the congregation of the Holy One not be
katzon asher eyn-lahem ro'eh [as sheep which have no shepherd].*
[Numbers 27:15-17]

The word our English Bibles translate as "appoint", or "set", in the above passage is *paqad*⁹. The first Biblical usage of this Hebrew verb root is in Genesis 21:1, where we read:

*And the Holy One visited [paqad] Sarah as he had said,
and the Holy One did unto Sarah as he had spoken.*

The Process of Selecting Moshe's Successor

Note that Moshe did not presume to "select" or "appoint" his successor. He asked The Holy One to "visit" someone [like the Holy One had visited him, at the burning bush, no doubt], and *impregnate* him as the Holy One had done to Sarah. The Holy One then not only chose Moshe's successor, but told Moshe specifically how to establish him in his new function. The Holy One said to Moshe:

*Take Y'hoshua son of Nun, a man of the Ruach, and lay your hands upon him.
Have him stand before Elazar the kohen and before the entire witness throng,
and let them see you commission him.
Invest him with **mehodcha alav** [some of your splendor/radiance¹⁰],
so that the entire witness throng of Israel will sh'ma him.*

Y'hoshua was not selected *by Moshe*. Moshe would, it is fair to assume, probably have preferred that one of his own sons succeed him. Nor was Y'hoshua selected *by the tribal elders*. Had that been the process I can assure you that there would have been at least 12 prophet-candidates competing with each other! Y'hoshua was also not selected *by the Sanhedrin*. The Sanhedrin would probably have chosen a younger man - someone with political clout like Pinchas or Itamar. And of course Y'hoshua was most definitely not selected *by the popular vote of the people*. Y'hoshua's selection was by the Holy One, and by the Holy One alone. It occurred without *anyone's* advice, consent, or approval. True leaders and shepherds, you

⁹ *Paquad* is *peh, kuf, dalet*. Strong's Hebrew word #6485, it is pronounced *paw-kad'*.

¹⁰ It is said in the Talmud that the face of Moshe gleamed like the sun, while the face of Y'hoshua shone like the moon. *Bava Bathra 75a*.

see, are not made by either the laying on of hands or the anointing with oil. True leaders are made *by the Holy One*, pure and simple.

Y'hoshua was also not chosen *because* he was the one Moshe laid hands on and publicly commissioned¹¹. Moshe was told to lay hands on Y'hoshua not *in order* that he might be set apart by the people for leadership, but *because* he *had already been* set apart by the Holy One for leadership. There is no magic in the hands of leaders, nor in vials of anointing oil, nor in the pronouncement of titles. Men can lay hands on each other, anoint one another with oil, and proclaim each other apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists till their arms get tired and their tongues fall out, and it will not mean one thing. The act of laying on of hands, or anointing with oil, to commission someone as a leader is *meaningless at best, and patently fraudulent at worst, unless the Holy One specifically directs it in the given circumstance*.

The laying on of Moshe's hands could not have imparted anything meaningful to Y'hoshua *but for the fact that the Holy One directed it and empowered it by His Breath and Word*. The power was – is – not in Moshe's hands, you see – or in the hands of any man; the power is, as it has always been and will always be, in *the Holy One's Wonderful Words*.

The 2nd Generation Prophet-Priest Team Is Established

Moshe – prophet of the Holy One and friend of the Bridegroom, and Aharon - priest of the Community and friend of the Bride – functioned as a prophet-priest team for a generation. Sometimes the team worked well together – other times they worked at cross-purposes. Occasionally they even butted heads. Sometimes they were responsive to the Holy One's instructions, and were therefore extremely effective; other times, when they insisted on acting independent of the Holy One and 'doing their own thing', the results were disastrous.

But for good or for bad their time is now over. Aharon is dead. Moshe knows he is not going into the Promised Land with the Redeemed Community. A new *kohen* [priest] – Eleazar, son of Aharon – is already functioning by the time of today's aliyah. In today's aliyah Eleazar the priest's new prophet/team-mate – Y'hoshua – officially joins him. The Holy One wants it known right up front that these two are not to act independent of Him, nor independent of each other. They are to be 'joined at the hip' spiritually. Yehoshua is to do nothing without Eleazar. And

¹¹ English translations of Deuteronomy 34:9, which some manipulate to indicate to the contrary, is a mistranslation of the Hebrew phrase *ki-samach Moshe et-yadav alav*. In Hebrew, *ki* [kaf, yod] does not imply *causation*, but merely *correlation* or *sequential relationship*. Clearly, Y'hoshua was 'filled with the Spirit' at the time Moshe laid his hands upon him. It was not, however, the hands of Moshe that brought this about, but the Word of the Holy One.

neither of them, nor the assembly [Sanhedrin], nor the judges [beit din] nor the Community as a whole, are to do anything without the Holy One's specific instruction.

Speaking of Yehoshua the Holy One said:

***Ya'amod** [Let him stand in a posture of prayer] before Eleazar the priest, who shall seek the decision of the Urim before the Holy One on his behalf. By this word [Y'hoshua], along with all Israelites and the entire throng of witnesses, shall come and go.'*

The lesson learned the hard way by Moshe and Aharon is that *the Redeemed Community does not belong to its prophets or its priests, but to the Holy One alone*. He alone is to determine every aspect of life [and death] for His Bride to be.

***Leadership Functions in The Redeemed Community
Are Not To Follow Any of the Patterns of Leadership Succession
Found in the Pagan World***

Please keep this spiritual truth in mind. Men/women are not called or chosen by the Holy One to be prophets or priests - or to any other 'leadership' position for that matter – on the basis of decision-making abilities, talents, popularity, teaching or training skills, or charisma. That is how the pagan world chooses leaders. And that is precisely why the pagan world's leaders 'lord it over' and oppress their subjects, as Yeshua of Natzret correctly observed.

Choose leaders for yourself – or let some ecclesiastical or advisory board or election process do it for you – if you wish. But if you do so, be aware that by so doing you will get only the kind of leadership you *deserve* - not the kind of leadership your Divine Bridegroom, who sees in you no blemish, and no divination – would give you.

***The Holy One's Criteria For Choosing
and Setting In Place True Leaders***

The Holy One chooses men and women to be prophets and priests and leaders on one criterion only. You may not want to hear this, but here it is. He chooses only *those who will – in the instances He considers most important for the generation at hand – submit to His Kingship and sh'ma His instructions*. Things the world considers important – natural ability, skill, articulation, popularity, charisma, education, experience, recommendations - are to the Holy One at best irrelevant, and at worst counterproductive and dangerous, in the context of the Holy One's Community. The Holy One's kingdom, you see, is based not on human excellence but on *submission to His Will and service to His Creation*. The Holy One's idea of

service is not to put on a dazzling demonstration of human talent but to quietly and consistently reflect His Light and His Glory, neither claiming nor accepting any glory or honor for oneself. And take this to the bank: *any prophet, priest, or other leader who fails to understand and submit to this will lead the Community to disaster every time.*

These are critical times – by no means a time for religious ‘business as usual’. Looking for leadership *in all the wrong places* can be disastrous - for ourselves and our families.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Let us begin our study by answering some basic questions about how the Holy One prepared Moshe for death.

[A] What mountain does the Holy One instruct Moshe to climb?

[B] For what purpose is Moshe instructed to climb this mountain?

[C] What does the Holy One tell Moshe will happen to him after he completes these instructions?

[D] Why does the Holy One tell Moshe this will happen?

2. Moshe’s response to the Holy One’s instructions is to make a request of the Holy One. *Before I go* (he implies) *appoint my successor*. Delay the sentence, he requests, in order both his successor and the people may be prepared for his departure. Note that because of the Holy One’s gracious acquiescence to this request, we have many things, not the least of which is the wonderful treasure we call the Book of Deuteronomy.

[A] List the specific things Moshe envisioned his successor as doing [verses 15-17].

[B] Describe the elements of the ceremony the Holy One instructed Moshe to perform in connection with the naming of his successor.

[C] How was Y’hoshua, the chosen successor, to make decisions?

3. In today’s Haftarah the Holy One gives Eliyahu more details about the judgment he is about to unleash on the kingdom of Ahaz and Yizavel.

[A] How many people in the kingdom of Ahaz and Yizavel will be spared, after the swords wielded by Hazael of Syria, Yehi of Israel, and Elisha, Eliyahu’s successor, complete their destruction.

[B] Where did Eliyahu go immediately after speaking with the Holy One?

[C] Was this the first thing the Holy One had told Eliyahu to do?

[D] What did Eliyahu do when he reached the field of Shafat at Abel Meholah?

[E] In Smith's Bible Dictionary and/or in Strong's, look up *Abel Meholah*. What does that name mean?

4. In today's assigned reading from the apostolic writings we continue in the aftermath of Yeshua's act of *qana* [zeal, jealousy] for His 'Father's House', namely the driving out of the money-changers. In the moments after completing this act of *qana*, Yeshua speaks of something that spurred instant controversy – something that was misinterpreted by the religious leaders of the day to refer to the imminent destruction of the very Temple Messiah had just 'cleansed'. Their talk of the security and indestructibility of the Temple fits very well with the theme of the 'Three Weeks' of mourning for the destruction of the Temple which took place almost exactly 40 years after the conversation we read about in Yochanan's eyewitness account.

Yeshua answered them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

The Y'hudim therefore said, "Forty-six years was this temple in building, and will you raise it up in three days?"

[Yochanan's Eyewitness Account @ 2:19-20]

[A] In response to what request did Yeshua make this famous statement?

[B] How did Yeshua's statement answer the request made of Him?

[C] The theme of three days is not a new concept. On a separate page from your other answers to today's questions write an essay concerning the significance of three days in Scripture and Hebraic thought. [NOTE: If you are having trouble getting started, look at Hosea 6:2 and Jonah 1:17 - then look up the number Three in the Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols]. Your essay should consist of at least 3 paragraphs (each paragraph consisting of at least 3 sentences) and should be checked for grammar and spelling before you consider it complete.

May we all be healed from the afflictions of the chet egel.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Proverbs 16:9 and 16:20-21

A man's heart plans his course, but the Holy One directs his steps.

*He who heeds the Word finds prosperity.
Whoever trusts in the Holy One is blessed.
The wise in heart will be called prudent.
Pleasantness of the lips promotes instruction.*