

*Shiur L'Yom Chamishi*¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Mattot:*** **Numbers 31:25-54**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 2:1-2**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Philippians 3:15**

*Divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war,
who went out to battle, and all the witness throng.*

[Numbers 31:27]

Today's Meditation is Job 15:34-35;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #17B, *Yihyu L'Ratzon* [The Expressions] – Part II

Moshe has spoken a shocking thing. As he stared incredulously at the crowd of Midyani refugees that Pinechas brought back from the recent battle he actually called for a blow of death to be inflicted on every male child and every Midyani woman of child-bearing age. Absurd! Unthinkable! Unheard of!

But wait a moment! Was Moshe's command heeded? Were captive women and children really slaughtered at his word? Was his order ever approved by the counsel of elders? Were the fatal blows he called for ever struck?

We are spared by Torah the report as to whether his call was heeded by the Covenant Community. The sages of Israel assume it was. I am not so sure.

Torah does not bear record of it. We are not specifically told, one way or another.

Note that not a single Midyani woman or child's death is described in the text.

And note that we **are** told that there were 32,000 'persons' [in Hebrew, *nefesh adam*] from the camp of the Midyani that were subsequently divided amongst the Hebrews. See Numbers 31:42, 46.

Whether or not Moshe's decree was implemented, however, it is highly offensive to our 21st Century Mindset. Contemporary Culture. Our Contemporary Culture's worldview - scarred as it is by Holocaust and genocidal campaigns waged by the cruelest of savages - defines what Moshe ordered done to the women and children of Midyan as a 'war crime'.

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But that should come as no surprise. Contemporary Culture loves to gorge itself on the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Contemporary Culture has bought into the lie of the Serpent one hundred percent – and as a result people who immerse themselves in Contemporary Culture absolutely love to employ labels, impossible standards, and high-sounding moral judgments - well, *to everyone but themselves*, that is.

The Holy One has never called us to employ labels. His calling upon our lives has nothing to do with making ‘moral judgments’. His calling is simply to *sh’ma His Voice*, to *sh’mar His Covenant*, and to *asah His instructions for human life on planet earth in real time*.

It is not our mission to *judge other people on the earth*; our assignment is simply to *follow His leadership and humbly walk and diligently co-labor with Him as He seeks to redeem as many as will listen from the lie of the Serpent and the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

The Absurdity of Viewing or Discussing the Actions of People and Nations in terms of ‘Morality’ or ‘Moral Equivalence’

A rhetorical concept often used by orators and demagogues in our days is ‘*morality*’. This or that thing that they want to encourage or promote they label as ‘moral’. Much more frequently however the demagogues of this world choose to employ the concept negatively. Everything they do not personally like or are not promoting they condescendingly label as ‘immoral’.

The fallen human mind would much rather think of other people and things outside itself as ‘immoral’ – and thus excuse itself from dealing with those things and those people in real ways, in real time.

Oh Beloved, do you not see? All this talk of ‘morality’ and ‘immorality’ is just a popular form of linguistic sorcery. It is a scheme of charlatans, designed to inflame the fallen emotions of, and therefore manipulate and control the thoughts and behavior of, the gullible masses.

When you hear people throwing around the labels ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’, therefore, immediately understand that you are dealing with is some Big-Brother type’s form of mind-control and behavior-manipulation.

There is no such thing as ‘morality’ or ‘immorality’; the whole idea is a mental construct based upon a shifting-sand mirage. Viewing the world or the actions of

people or governments in terms of ‘morality’ is like trying to paint the wind with imaginary finger paint.

‘*Morality*’ is not a Biblical term. It does not come from the mind of the Holy One. It is not part of the fruit of the Tree of Life. For you see, ‘morality’ is like ‘good’ and ‘evil’ – these are all whatever fallen, self-interested men decide to say they are in a given moment. The Holy One does not traffic in such nonsense. And we should not either.

In every instance, for people of the Covenant, the issue is never ‘morality’ or ‘immorality’, ‘good’ or ‘evil’, or ‘fairness’ or ‘unfairness’ – it is simply ‘***what does the Holy One say and feel about this particular person and situation?***’

Another word often tossed around today by the talking heads of contemporary culture is ‘*moral equivalence*’. Another way of saying the same thing is to call upon one person or nation involved in a controversy or conflict to ‘*exercise restraint*’, and make only a ‘*proportionate response*’ to a provocation.

‘Moral equivalence’, ‘restraint’, and ‘proportionate response’ are all meaningless terms, invented by the spirits of uncleanness that thrive on the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

If people want to label the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov – or any person or group of people who follow Him - as ‘immoral’ . . . well, I suspect He’s big enough to handle that. I suspect He is not one bit hurt, wounded, offended, upset, or intimidated by the fact that some arrogant, foolish man has applied a silly human label to him. As the Psalmist says:

***Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Holy One and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.”
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Holy One shall hold them in derision.***
[Psalm 2:1-3]

We who live by the empowerment of the *Ruach* of the Holy One should also not be one bit hurt, wounded, offended, upset or intimidated by people throwing around the “I” word - i.e. *immoral* – at Him or at us. We should be learning how to recognize the ‘morality’ argument as precisely the *tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing*, that it is and always has been.

Our mission is to know and follow the Holy One, guided constantly – and solely – by His *Words of life instruction* and His *Eternal Ruach* [i.e. breath, spirit]. We are to continually test and adjust what we see in His Words of Life with what His *Ruach* is saying – and vice versa.

We do best when we leave the silly arguments about ‘morality’ to the political charlatans and self-appointed religious judges of our day.

Walking With the Holy One Means Making Real Decisions Involving Real People In Real Time

Walking in Covenant with the Holy One does not involve and is not consistent with sitting in ivory towers or the seat of the scornful applying theories and labels to concepts and ideas. Walking in Covenant with the Holy One involves making real decisions involving real people in real time.

With that in mind, let’s look at Moshe’s decree regarding the Midyani women and children – whether or not it was followed by the Community - through his eyes. He did not think in terms of ‘morality’ or ‘immorality’. He knew he had to think in terms of ‘what would the Holy One do?’ And he knew that whatever he decided, somebody was not going to like it.

Any way he sliced it, he knew there would be critics and haters.

In real life – absent a specific directive on the subject at hand from the wise counsel of the Holy One - there are no perfect decisions.

He was the Holy One had put in charge. While there was now a counsel of 70 elders in place to assist Moshe [Numbers 11:10-17], the reality – especially in light of the well-documented failures of the elders’ assembly in the matters of the sin of the spies, the rebellion of Korach, and the plague of *Ba’al Peor* - was that Moshe was still looked at by the Community as the one to propose a plan of action. If he did not hear from the Holy One specifically, he had to do the best he could, balancing his knowledge of the Holy One against the suggestions and urges of his own fallen flesh. The issue of what to do with the women and children Pinechas had brought back from the war with Midyan was one of the latter situations.

Absent a direct word from Heaven, Moshe just had to do the best he could.

After all, if anyone in the Camp of the Redeemed knew the Midyani - and the powerful spiritual bond these people had forged with the false god Ba’al Peor - it was Moshe.

What Did Moshe Know And When Did He Know It?

Remember that Moshe had lived among the Midyani for forty long years. He had spent decades tending the sheep of the highest-ranking Midyani diplomat on earth, Yitro [Jethro]. He had married one of this influential Midyani's daughters. He had sired two Midyani children by this Midyani princess. Almost forty years later, he knew the children he had sired through his union with her would never be his children - would never be Hebrews – would never be part of the Community of the Redeemed – and he knew why. He knew how from the moment of conception Midyani women trained and indoctrinated their children – both male and female – in the ancestral Midyani forms of sorcery, idolatry, deception, seduction, subversion, and perversion.

He knew very well from personal experience and from extensive observation that Midyani whose lives revolved around Ba'al Peor and Hebrews whose lives revolved around the worship and service of the Holy One just do not mix well. He knew from heartbreaking personal experience that it was not to be expected that either Midyani women or any child born to or raised by them would ever break away from Ba'al Peor and the abominable perversions associated with him and become true devotees of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov.

Tzipporah had not done it. Yitro had not done it². Moshe's own half-Hebrew offspring, Gershon and Elazar, had not done it.

Moshe had to decide – was bringing the widowed women and fatherless children of Midyan into the Camp of the Redeemed, just before the invasion and conquest of Eretz Yisrael began, for which they were being prepared, something that could be risked?

Moshe decided it was not. It is hard to judge him for that. It is certainly not our place to criticize or second-guess him, several millennia after the fact. The point of the story is that real war is not a game. In a real war, there is a real aftermath, and real decisions – very tough decisions - have to be made concerning real people.

Nobody has ever behaved – or will ever behave - completely righteously in the context of war.

So Beloved, never take it upon yourself to judge or condemn others for what they do or say in the course of – or in the immediate aftermath of – war. With whatever measure you judge, you see, it will eventually be judged unto you.

² See Exodus 18:27 and Numbers 10:30.

The Division of the Spoil

When Avram fought the first war of the Covenant nation, supernaturally defeating the trained armies of four kings of the North with a special force consisting of 318 servants and mercenaries, he found himself in possession of all the wealth of Sodom. He wanted no part of any of it. He gave 10 per cent of the captured wealth to Melchizedek [Genesis 14:20] and returned the remainder to the king of Sodom. **Genesis 14:21-24.**

Moshe was now faced with a similar decision. Pinechas brought back from the war with Midyan not only 32,000 captives, but also 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, and 61,000 donkeys.

Unless Moshe ordered a mass extinction of animals, to go with his order to execute Midyani women and their sons, he was going to have to either give these animals to his enemies or divide them among the Covenant People. This time the Holy One spoke. He appeared to Moshe and made the choice for him. Here is how Torah records the God-encounter:

Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe lemor

And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying

Sa et rosh malkoach hashvi ba'adam uvabehemah

Count up the plunder that was taken—of man and beast—

atah v'El'azar hakohen verashei avot ha'edah

you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the witness throng

Vechatzita et-hamalkoach beyn tofsey hamilchamah

and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war,

hayotz'im latzva uveyn kol-ha'edah

who went out to battle, and all the witness throng.

Vaharemota meches l'Adonai me'et anshei hamilchamah

“And levy a tribute for the Holy One on the men of war

hayotz'im latsava echad nefesh mechamesh hame'ot min-ha'adam

who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons,

umin-habakar umin-hachamorim umin-hatzon

and the cattle, and the donkeys, and the sheep.

Mimachatzitam tikachu

Take it from their half,

venatatah l'Elazar hakohen t'rumat Adonai

and give it to Elezar the priest as a heave offering to the Holy One.

Umimachatzit bnei-Yisra'el tikach echad achuz min-hachamishim

And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty,

min-ha'adam min-habakar

drawn from the persons, from the cattle,

min-hachamorim umin-hatzon mikol-habehemah

from the donkeys, and from the sheep, and from all the livestock,

venatatah otam l'Levi'im shomrei mishmeret Mishkan Adonai

and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of YHVH.

[Exodus 31:25-30]

The Holy One directed Moshe and Elazar to divide the sum total of all the 'persons' and the livestock of Midyan into two equal halves. One half was to be set aside for the 12,000 men [1,000 from each tribe] who actually participated in the war. The other one half was to be set aside for the Community of the Redeemed as a whole.

Then, from the half that was set aside to the 12,000 warriors, a 20% levy was assessed. Hence, 10% of the total was set apart to be presented as a *t'rumah* [i.e. elevation presentation] for the service of the priests at the *Mish'kan*. This was the first *t'rumah* presented since the *Mish'kan* was commissioned, back at Sinai, almost 40 years previously.

And, from the half that was set aside to the Community 1/50th - i.e. one percent of the total – was given to the Levi'im.

What Are We to Take Away From the Holy One's Directions Regarding the Dividing of the Spoils of the War With Midyan?

Some of you may be saying 'so what'? What possible lessons, you wonder, can we draw from instructions given by the Holy One, millennia ago, regarding how to divide the spoil of a war we did not fight?

Please understand that the Torah never includes any narrative strictly for historical purposes. As Shaul of Tarsus stated so beautifully: ***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. II Timothy 3:16.*** And particularly with regard to Torah's account of the Wilderness Wanderings Shaul explained: ***all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. I Corinthians 10:11.***

There is always an endless series of eternal messages to His People encoded in every Divine Discourse – and story – contained in the Torah. However mundane the narrative or seemingly archaic the subject matter, *the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Hebrews 4:16.

So . . . what are a couple of things the Holy One wants to teach us in the modern era from this ancient story?

1. All Unexpected, Unearned ‘Blessings and Windfalls We Receive Are For Sharing – and For His Glory

The first message we can take away from today’s aliyah of Torah is that the Holy One intends and empowers us to be responsible stewards of every blessing and windfall we receive. Whether we win a door prize at a baby shower, the lottery, the grand prize of Publisher’s Clearing House, or find anything from a dollar bill on the lawn to a hundred thousand shares of Google stock from the initial IPO in the drawer of the desk our deceased uncle willed us, our receipt of the blessing immediately makes us responsible for stewarding it.

When the Creator of the Universe blesses a person in Covenant with Him there is a whole lot more going on than just a supernatural version of a Random Act of Kindness. Every blessing the Creator of the Universe pours out into our lives is brilliantly designed by Him to function as a strategic weapon in the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven into one or more of our spheres of influence - and beyond.

Every blessing released into our lives carries a cross-generational assignment and is designed to meet eternal Kingdom Objectives every bit as much as it does our immediate personal needs.

In other words, the things with which the Holy One our God blesses us are not ours to fritter away – they are tools given for the purpose of advancing His Kingdom.

He who receives a blessing from Heaven is never its ultimate intended recipient.

The receipt of every blessing ‘starts the clock’ for us to release it in a way that will bring honor to Him.

The blessings the Holy One pours into our lives are not for the purpose of enhancing our physical pleasure or comfort; they are about OUR MISSION. The

blessings He releases over us are not to enable us to survive in a big, bad, cruel world of ever-advancing darkness; they are to empower us and weaponize us with all we need to invade and slowly fill up the cruel world with oases of hope, cities of refuge, and beacons of Divine Light that He knows will push back the darkness.

We who receive blessings from the Holy One are just carriers of Heavenly Cargo. Each blessing we receive has a strategic bill of lading built into it. Our job is to take good care of it while it is in our possession, then turn it over to the next carrier.

We are therefore to respond to every blessing we receive by exercising extreme vigilance to order our lives and human interactions in ways that will: [a] nurture the development to maturity of those blessings in us, [b] preserve the purity of the blessing, and [c] provide ample opportunity for us to share those blessings with others.

Every blessing spoken by the Holy One, you see, contains a bondage-breaking empowerment, a darkness-banishing commission, and an atmosphere-shifting authority to release the substance of the blessing on others.

2. The People the Holy One Uses to Act as ‘Midwives’ In Bringing the Blessing to Us Are Intended to Share Bountifully In It

Please note that the 12,000 men – 1,000 from each tribe – who actually went to war with Midyan and captured all the livestock were assigned a 50% ‘finder’s fee’. That’s a pretty rich reward! Just in sheep that meant each man received at least 25 sheep apiece. What does one man who lives in a tent do with an immediate addition to his household of a ready made herd of 25 sheep? That does not take into consideration the cow, the donkey, and the servant girl [a water carrier and gatherer of firewood] he also received. In that day, and in that world, the haul that the Holy One ordained that each of these 12,000 men received was the equivalent of him winning the lottery.

You will note these men turned around and gave a stunning memorial offering of gold – consisting of the equivalent of a whopping 16,750 golden shekels – to Moshe and Elazar for use in the operation of the *Mish’kan*.

What is up with that, you ask? In the Kingdom of the Holy One, those who receive, give; and those who give, receive.

The Holy One loves – and trusts – people who act as midwives for someone else to receive a material or spiritual blessing. Basically, He knows that if a person will

faithfully and without complaint or demand for payment midwife someone else's blessing once, he can be trusted to do the same with greater and greater blessings in the future.

So the Holy One wants those who assist in gathering in the blessing to share bountifully in it. He knows if they were faithful in small things, they will be faithful in greater things.

Avraham *avinu* – i.e. our father Abraham - is a great example. He kept mid-wifing blessings for other people. He kept getting blessed, then giving it all way. He never asked for anything except a son. He never demanded a material reward. He knew the Holy One Himself was his exceeding great reward. **Genesis 15:1**. And so he took joy in pouring out blessings on other people. He proved himself trustworthy with the blessings of healing, prophecy, intercession, and material goods.

You and I may never win the lottery. The Publisher's Clearinghouse van may never drive up to our door. But someday, somehow, we will find ourselves blessed – spiritually or emotionally - in some way we never deserved or earned. What today's aliyah of Torah suggests is that, when that happens, we immediately begin to look around for the people who participated in bringing us that blessing, and sharing it with them.

This is how the Holy One cultivates a culture of joyful blessing midwives. He knows the blessings He pours out can be powerful, atmosphere-shifting forces for the advancement of His Kingdom. And He knows that with just a few people willing to serve as blessing midwives, instead of selfish gluttons, He can take huge strides toward fixing the world.

Questions For Today's Study

1. How, to whom, and in what percentages, did the Holy One direct that the livestock captured in the war with Midyan be distributed?

2. What did the men who had participated in the war with Midyan present to Moshe and Elazar as a memorial offering for the *Mish'kan*?

2. Today's haftarah - verses 1 and 1 from the second chapter of the book of Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] - consists of the first prophetic message the Holy One wants young Yirmayahu to speak on His behalf. This prophetic declaration is addressed to the Hebrew residents of the city of Jerusalem, and it is very tender and poignant. In English, the message Yirmayahu was directed to deliver reads as follows:

***“I remember you -
The kindness of your youth,
The love of your betrothal,
When you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.
[Jeremiah 2:2(b)]***

[A] What three things does the Holy One want Yirmayahu to let the people of Jerusalem know that He ‘remembers’?

[B] What do you think the Holy One is referring to as the ‘youth’ of the Hebrews?

[C] What do you think the Holy One is referring to as the ‘betrothal’ of the Hebrews?

[D] What event do you think the Holy One is referring to as ‘when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown’?

[E] Look up in Strong’s Concordance and a Hebrew Lexicon the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘remember’ in this verse. Write the Hebrew word and its vowel markings, then transliterate it into English. Finally, write a working definition/description of the action this Hebrew verb depicts.

3. In today’s suggested meditation verse from the Brit Chadasha Shaul of Tarsus [Paul] says:

***Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;
and if in anything you think otherwise,
God will reveal even this to you.
[Philippians 3:15]***

[A] In Strong’s look up the Greek word our text translates as *mature* [Greek word #5046]. Look at the Strong’s definitions, then review the other uses of this word in the B’rit Chadasha [see especially Matthew 5:48 and 19:21; I Corinthians 2:6, 13:10, and 14:13; Colossians 1:28 and 4:12; James 3:2 and I John 4:18]. Then write a summary of what you think Shaul is talking about in this verse when he speaks of those who are ‘mature’.

[B] What would be the opposite of a person who is ‘mature’ in the sense Shaul is talking about in this verse?

[C] How does Shaul anticipate that a person who has a different mindset than the mature believer will be taught/reproved?

*May the Holy One’s Word and His Will for your life be your passionate desire,
and may you not be led astray, by the lusts of your hearts and eyes,
to settle for things less valuable.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Job 15:34-35

[Elifaz the Temanite rebukes Iyov (Job)]

***The congregation/assembly/witness throng of hypocrites will be barren,
And fire will consume the tents of bribery.
They conceive trouble and bring forth futility;
Their womb prepares deceit.***