

through the 9th of the fifth Biblical month [the month the Babylonians taught us to call *Av*]. During this three-week period the sages of the Hebrew people call upon us to remember and make *t'shuvah* for the sins our ancestors committed which led to the destruction of Holy City of Jerusalem and the razing of the *Beit HaMikdash* [i.e. the Temple].

These traumatic events have occurred twice in history – both instances coming during this exact three-week period.

The first time Jerusalem fell to foreign armies and the Temple was destroyed was in the year 586 CE², when the invading army was that of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

The second time it occurred was in 70 CE³ when the invading army was that of Rome army commanded by Titus Flavius.

So *here we are* Beloved. The imminent and bloody '*time of war*' about which I warned you in the introductory shiur last week is now officially upon us.

The life-and-death struggle for which Torah began to prepare you in parsha *Pinchas* is about to break forth with a vengeance.

The watchman is crying aloud in the streets. The sound of the shofar is piercing the air.

This is the day. The hour draws nigh.

² The prophet Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] recorded the date on which Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. Jeremiah specifies that the destruction of the temple occurred on the 10th day of the fifth Jewish month [*Av*]. Yirmayahu wrote: ***"On the tenth day of the fifth month, which was in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Holy One, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire".*** Jeremiah 52:12-13.

³ In 70 CE during Passover the Roman army led by Titus surrounded Jerusalem and besieged it. Throughout the 4-month period that followed the Romans assailed the city's walls and gates with battering rams and launched torrents of stone, iron and firebombs over the walls with catapults. One night in August a group of Roman soldiers climbed the walls of the Antonia fortress, killed a guard, and sounded a trumpet. As residents fled to the Temple the Romans demolished Antonia and used its stones to build a siege ramp up to the Temple terrace. On one of the last days of August, fire reached the Temple complex. During the next few days the Romans destroyed not only the Temple but virtually all the city. Josephus reveals that the Romans set fire to the temple on the 10th day of the fifth Jewish month – on the anniversary of the day on which the Babylonians had destroyed Solomon's temple a few hundred years earlier. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered by the Romans, and those who survived were enslaved. It is written that there were so many Jews flooding the slave market that a Hebrew slave could be purchased for less than the price of a horse.

Just over the next ridge the hand of the archer is even now reaching for his bow. A short distance beyond your line of sight hundreds of horses trained for war are pawing the earth and straining impatiently at the reins.

The burnished metal of a thousand swords glistens in the morning sun.

The drones are in the air. The missile-launchers are loaded and aimed at your city, your neighborhood, your house, your head, and your loved ones' hearts.

Are *you* ready? Has *your household* been prepared against this day?

BATTLE STATIONS everyone!

A Parsha Mattot Travelogue

Parsha ***Mattot*** will begin with the Divine Bridegroom's final '*pre-war preparation*' teaching. The Captain of the armies of Heaven will give us a brief discourse about the making, annulling and keeping of '*vows*' and '*oaths*'.

Why does the All-Wise One choose this moment to speak to us on the subject of *vows* and *oaths*? Because He knows that people who are preparing to go – or to send their loved ones – off to war are hard-pressed not to make vows. "*If God brings me back home safely . . .*" they say. "*If God protects you from the enemy's arrows . . .*" their loved ones whisper in reply. And each of the parties follow these words with glorious commitments of the noble things they will do . . . 'if' the Holy One meets the condition they have laid out.

Some vows like this are made out of *fear*. Others are made out of *passion*. Some are made thoughtfully and prayerfully; others are blurted out on the basis of nothing more than a fleeting emotion. The Holy One however wants our words – the words of the earthly ambassadors of His Kingdom - to be *as His Words are*. He wants the words of those who represent Him to the world to be *flowing in wisdom, full of covenantal power and authority, and 100% trustworthy*.

When the Holy One's teaching on vows is complete the war for which we started preparing last week will commence in earnest. Trying to live in peace with those who wish us nothing but harm will suddenly no longer be an option.

We will receive a directive from the Holy One that we are to *make war upon the Midyani people*. We will then *gird up our loins*, and take up our arms - and a

thousand men from each tribe - twelve thousand of us in all - will *run to the battle*.

A narrative report of the war will follow. The fighting will be fierce. Blood will flow freely. Princes and paupers alike will fall to the sword. Many women and children will die as well. Many will be taken captive.

This narrative will in turn be followed by a description of the process through which the soldiers from the Camp of the Redeemed who physically fought in the war were restored to *tahor* status and full fellowship with the community after their immersion in the life-changing realm of warfare and death.

We will then read a detailed narrative discussing the process through which the *spoils of the war on Midyan* were divided.

This will lead us to *a time of special thanksgiving and holy reverence*, as we approach the Holy One communally to express our gratitude for not only the victory He provided us over those who conspired to destroy us, but the *supernatural assistance He gave us* in preserving us from death.

Parsha ***Mattot*** will then conclude with an explanation of how it came to be that rather than claim their inheritance inside the Promised Land proper the tribes of Reuven and Gad as well half of the tribe of Menashe decided to settle outside Eretz Yisrael on land lying east of the Jordan River.

A Look At The Haftarah for Parsha Mattot

Jeremiah 1:1 – 2:13

This week's haftarah comes from the early chapters of *Sefer Yirmayahu*. The theme of '*Battle Stations, Everyone!*' definitely continues in effect.

In the haftarah a young *kohen-in-waiting* named ***Yirmayahu*** is going to be dramatically *apprehended, called, commissioned and sent out* to his Divinely ordained *battle station* by the Holy One. His assigned mission is to serve as a ***navi lagoyim*** [i.e. a *prophet/spokesperson unto nations*] during some of the most turbulent times in history.

Yirmayahu hailed from a small village called ***Anatot*** which was located just a few miles north of Jerusalem. This quiet city of *kohanim* was located in the tribal allotment of Binyamin.

What does the life of a young priest-in-waiting from the village of Anatot have to do with the nations of the world, you ask? Let's consider the issue.

What is Going on in the World?

In Yirmayahu's day the world powers of the era were *Assyria, Babylon and Egypt*. As each of these world powers in turn sought to expand its kingdom the Promised Land naturally fell squarely within its sights. The Holy One put a hook in their jaw and drew the nations to the lands where He had established His Covenant People.

Oh Beloved. Any time the world comes knocking at your door *you have a choice to make*. Will you *stand strong in the Holy One's covenant, be who you were created to be, and function as the light to the nations you were established as?* Or will you *dally and flirt with the nations, lusting after their wealth while trembling before their petty kings and cruel armies?*

Will you stir them to piety with your *purity of lifestyle* and your *passion for life* - or will you stain your garments with their perverse alternative lifestyles and adopt their macabre fascination with death?

If you do the former the Holy One's Name will be praised in all the earth. But if you do the latter the Holy One's Name will be profaned in all the earth – and purging must take place else the Holy One's redemptive plan for mankind and Creation will be compromised.

That is why in 722 BCE the Northern Kingdom of Israel – the nation of Northern Tribes founded by Jeroboam after the death of Solomon - was given over by the Holy One to the armies of Assyria.

And that is why in Yirmayahu's day the Southern Kingdom of *Y'hudah* [Judah], the holy city of Jerusalem, and the sleepy village of *Anatot* looked to be the next set of squares on the chessboard for one of the player nations of the world to occupy and fortify.

The people living in Y'hudah during the centuries which will culminate in Yirmayahu's time have you see for the most part *not been faithful* to the Covenant the Holy One made with their ancestors.

Over the centuries they have ceased to love the Holy One their God with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their minds.

Over time they have come to see the Holy One less and less as a *beloved and gloriously worthy Bridegroom* and more and more as *an annoying former flame*.

Instead of making Him their most cherished intimate companion they have indulged in illicit liaisons with - and engaged in affairs of the heart with - the nations. They have not *sh'ma*-ed the Voice of the Holy One and *sh'mar*-ed and *asah*-ed His Torah, nor have they been the 'light to the nations' after the pattern of Avraham and Sarah which they were called, miraculously birthed, and carefully trained to be.

They have gradually acquiesced first to the *worldview* – and more and more to the *cultures* and *mindsets* and *customs* and *false religions* - of the pagan nations that surround them.

Oh there is of course a *remnant of faithful covenant people* scattered among the populace. And occasional brief spurts of revival have burst forth, shining a few months or years, but have then, alas, disappeared from whence they came.

And so the *ranks of the faithful remnant* are shrinking with each new generation. The trend is definitely not good.

Enter the Holy One, Stage Right.

The Holy One knows *what is happening*. And He knows *why it is happening*.

And He knows very well *how, absent Divine Intervention, it is all going to turn out*.

He wants to give the nations of the world *another option*. And He wants to give His covenant people in Y'hudah *another chance*.

He knows that what the people need in '*such a time as this*' is *not just another kohen, doing the same thing kohanim have done with decreasing passion and decreasing impact for the past several generations*.

He is keeping a close eye on the sleepy village of Anatot, and an unsuspecting young son of a *kohen* named Hilkiyah.

And one day - as angels look on in wonder - the Holy One intervenes.

Most of the world had no idea any kind of Divine Intervention was going on. The

powerful men of the world - the rulers of earthly kingdoms and the talking heads of established religion were totally oblivious. The rich and the famous men of the earth never had a clue that *Heaven was about to invade earth*.

The Holy One did not send an earthquake, a fire, or a strong wind. All He did was appear to a young *kohen-in-waiting* named Yirmayahu and totally rock his world.

All that happened was that the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov declared to the *kohen-in-training* that from before his conception he had been Divinely chosen not to serve in the storied chambers of the Holy Temple but instead to fulfill a very special and extremely challenging mission in the streets of cities and the courts of kings. For the Voice that rocked Yirmayahu's world that day declared to him:

navi⁴ l'goyim netaticha

As a prophet/spokesperson unto nations have I appointed you

[Jeremiah 1:4]

Wow!! But . . . “*what exactly **IS** a ‘navi l'goyim’*” young Yirmayahu must have wondered. And . . . “*what exactly does a **navi l'goyim DO***” the son of Hilkiyah must have asked.

Up to this point in life Yirmayahu and his family had quite naturally expected that he was being prepared to serve the Holy One and His covenant people as a *kohen* – following in the footsteps of his father and his *father's father* and his *father's father's father* all the way back to Aharon.

But the Holy One has had *other plans* all along. Instead of seeing young Yirmayahu as a *kohen-in-training* the Holy One sees him as a ***navi l'goyim***. And the Holy One sees this happening not when he reaches some magical age and maturity level, or completes some special training at the feet of sages and rabbis – but ***RIGHT NOW!!!***

Keep in mind that the difference between a *kohen-in-training* and a *navi l'goyim* is . . . well . . . it is sort of like *the difference between night and day*, Beloved.

⁴ The Hebrew noun ***navi*** [*nun, veit, yod, alef*, Strong's Hebrew word #5030, pronounced *nah-vee*] is first found in Torah in Genesis 20:7. In that verse the Divine Voice speaks to Avimelech, King of Gerar, in a dream, saying concerning Avraham:

. . . restore to the man his wife; for he is a navi, and he will mediate/judge/intervene/intercede for you.

The verb root from which this noun is derived is ***naba*** [*nun, beit, alef*, Strong's Hebrew word #5012], which means to *bubble up* or *pour forth abundantly* as water pours from a spring that has been tapped.

A *kohen* functions as an encouraging friend of the Bride; a *navi l'goyim* functions as an inspector and enforcer for the Bridegroom.

A *kohen* speaks gentle and diplomatic words of edification, encouragement, and exhortation; a *navi l'goyim* roars like a lion about to devour its prey.

A *kohen* serves quietly and ministers peace; a *navi l'goyim* commands rapt attention and demands radical transformation.

A *kohen* artfully guides a scalpel with which he separates that which is *tamei* from that which is *t'hor* and that which is *chol* from that which is *k'dosh*; a *navi l'goyim* wields a mighty two-edged sword which he aims at the hearts of those who rebel against the Holy One and serve other gods.

A *kohen* teaches the Torah to children; a *navi l'goyim* proclaims impending judgment to world leaders.

The Holy One leaves no doubt about which path in life He wants Yirmayahu to take. The Voice of the Divine Bridegroom declares in the ears of the young man from Anatot:

al-kol-asher eshlachacha telech

to whoever I send you, go

...

v'et kol-asher atzavcha tedaber

and whatever I instruct you, speak.

To add emphasis the Holy One then stretched forth His Holy Essence to Yirmayahu in the form of a Divine Hand and actually did something very special which Scripture records as *touching the young man's mouth*. In connection with this Immaculate Touch the Holy One is recorded as saying to Yirmayahu:

hineh natati devarei beficha

Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

Re'eh hifkadeticha hayom hazeh

Behold, I have set you this day

al-ha-goyim v'al-ha-mamlachot

over the nations and over the kingdoms

lintosh v'lintotz uleha'avid

to root out and to pull down, and to destroy and to throw down

v'laharos livnot velintoa

and to build and to plant.
[Jeremiah 1:9-10]

Wow! Heaven is indeed about to invade earth. And the innocent-looking portal through which the invasion is to come is going to be the mouth of young Yirmayahu, son of Hilkiyah, of the sleepy village of Anatot.

The Holy One's calling to be a '*prophet to the nations*' is, as one might expect, destined to drastically change Yirmayahu's life. It will also change the world. In this week's brief haftarah reading we will get a small but convincing foretaste of just how dramatic an effect a prophetic call can have.

The kings and priests of the nations of earth – including Yirmayahu's own nation – think they have authority over their spheres of influence. The Holy One knows better. And we will soon know better too.

To your ***Battle Stations*** all you young – and young-at-heart - Yirmayahus out there!

A Quick Look at a Related Message from the B'rit Chadasha

Philippians 3:12-16

In the passage we will read this week from the B'rit Chadasha to correspond with our studies in parsha *Mattot* the 'battle stations' theme will take a slightly different twist. We will hear on more subtle issues of spiritual warfare from *Shaul of Tarsus*.

Shaul will speak to the followers of Messiah in Philippi about "*pressing on*", "*taking hold*" and "*straining toward*".

*... I press on
in order that I may take hold of
that for which also I was taken hold of by Messiah Y'shua.*

*Forgetting the things which are behind,
and stretching forward to the things which are before,
I press on toward the goal for the prize
of the high calling of the Holy One in Messiah Y'shua.*

[Philippians 3:12-14]

Shaul wants us to understand that the war is by no means over – and that we are in the middle of it whether we like it or not. He wants us to recognize that we not only each have our assigned battles to fight, but that we each have our own individual *battle stations* to man.

So ... why are you just standing there, Dear Reader? The cry is resounding. It is confirmed by two or more witnesses.

The war is on. The invasion has begun.

BATTLE STATIONS!

*May the Voice by which you live be the Holy One's, not your own
or that of any mere political, social, or religious leader.
For blessed is He who walks not in the counsel of the "un-Godly".*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

Petition #17B: Yihyu L'Ratzon [The Expressions] – Part II

V'kol ha-chosh'vim alai ra'ah

As for all those who design evil against me,

M'herah hafer atzatam v'qal'qel mach'shavtam

Nullify their counsel and disrupt their design

Aseh l'ma'an Shemecha

Do it for the sake of Your Name,

Aseh l'ma'an y'minecha

And for the sake of Your Right Hand

aseh l'ma'an K'dushatechem

and do it for the sake of Your Holiness.

Aseh l'ma'an Torahtecha

And do it for the sake of Your Torah

l'ma'an yechal'tzun yedideicha

that Your Beloved ones may be given rest

hoshiah y'min'cha v'aneinu

let Your Right Hand save, and respond to me

yihyu l'ratzon imrei fi

May the expressions of my mouth

v'hegyon libi l'fanecha

and the thoughts of my heart be for Your Face

Adonai tzuri v'goeli, oshe shalom bim'romaiv

HaShem, My Rock and My Redeemer, He Who makes peace in His Heights

Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol Yisrael

May He make peace upon us and all Israel