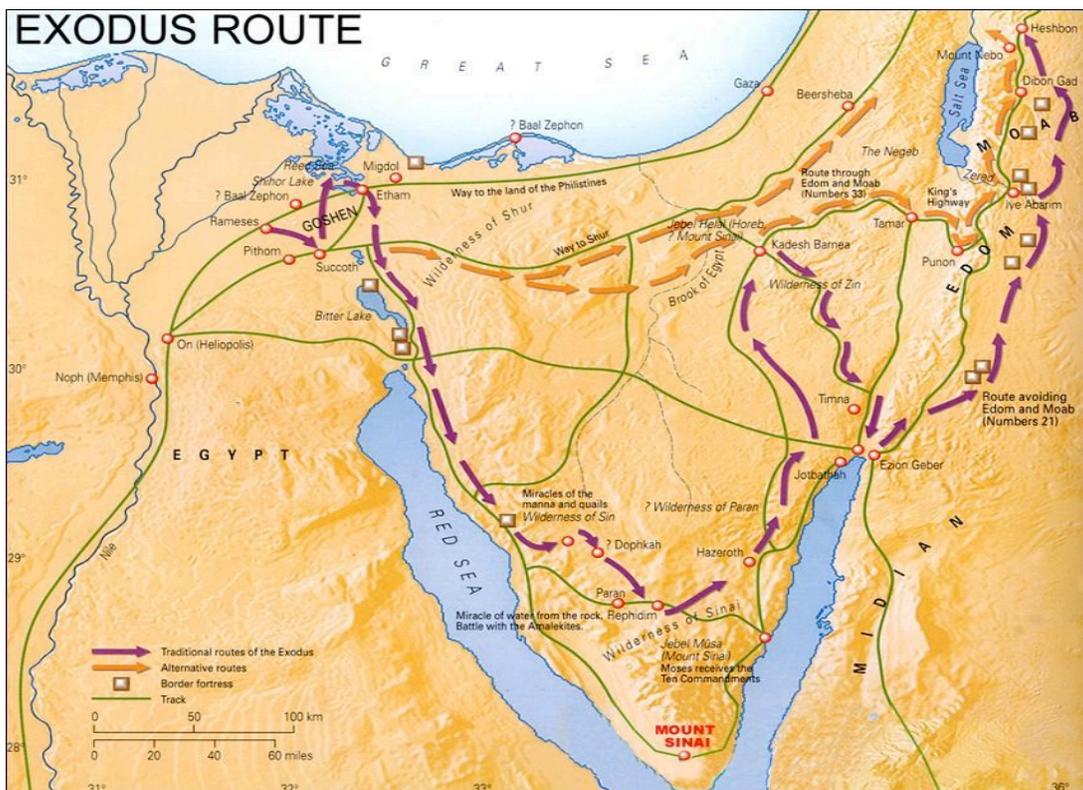


Introduction To Parsha #43: *Massei*¹

READINGS: ***Torah Massei:*** **Numbers 33:1—36:13**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 2:4 – 4:2**
 B’rit Chadasha: **James 4:1-12**



“These are the journeys of the children of Israel”
[Numbers 33:1]

This Week’s Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #18, Tzuri v’Goeli [*My Rock and My Redeemer*]

Through the medium of Torah we have been reliving the Greatest Adventure known to man. It all started the morning after Pharaoh’s Great Expulsion Decree². Ever since Exodus 13:17 the focus of our studies has been on what processes the Great Bridegroom-King of Heaven used to reshape His Chosen People from a rag-tag group of rescued slaves to a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Somewhere

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² Exodus 12:31-32 records that decree as "*Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Holy One as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also.*" These are words of expulsion, not permission.

between our rushing out to escape the madman's wrath at dawn on the morning after the Plague of the Firstborn and our calmly settling down on the plains of Moav on the eve of the conclusion of Sefer Bamidbar we have become new creations. Individually and collectively we are developing a new understanding of our identity, our mission, and our destiny.

Ours has been both a physical journey and a spiritual transformation.

This is not just an ancient story; this is our reason for being alive.

The reason we are here on earth at such a time as this is to re-enact the phases, stages, and transformations of the timeless wilderness odyssey on the stage of modernity, in real life, and in real time.

It Takes A Generation to Tell the Story

It has taken just a few days short of 40 years – an entire generation - to complete the journey from Ramses to the site from which we will at last make *aliyah*. The narrative of this momentous four decades in the history of man makes up the vast majority of the Torah, as over two-thirds of the text of the Book of Exodus as well as all of the books of Leviticus and Numbers are consumed with these chronicles.

Some of the most memorable events of human history have occurred during this forty-year period.

The physical manifestation of the Holy One's Presence in the World through a Pillar of Cloud by day and Fire by night.

The stunning miracle of Deliverance at the Sea of Reeds.

Manna falling from Heaven.

The supernatural release of streams of living water in the desert.

The unparalleled and unforgettable spectacle of a Divine Betrothal ceremony conducted under the Chuppah of Heaven.

The Holy One's downloading to mankind of His eternal instruction manual for human life on planet earth.

The revelation to humankind of both the Creator's Name and the essential characteristics of His Divine personality – mercy, graciousness, patience, covenant-faithfulness, goodness, trustworthiness, preferring forgiveness, yet willing to intervene in earthly affairs to discipline men and nations as and to the extent necessary to fulfill His Covenant undertakings and assist His mortal Covenant partners to fulfill theirs.

The construction of a beachhead on earth to be used as a launching pad for the invasion of this planet by the Kingdom of Heaven.

The establishment of a protocol of priesthood on earth which mirrors the activities which the Messiah and His Angels carry on without interruption in the Courts of Heaven.

There have, of course, been horrible low points as well as soaring high points.

An entire generation – *sans* two old graybeards and Moshe - has died along the way.

But by reason of what transpired in these four short decades the world – and the relationship of men with the Creator - will never be the same.

The Stages of the Great Odyssey – An Overview

The final parsha of Torah's *Chronicles of Wilderness Wandering* begins with these simple words:

Eleh massei v'nei-Yisra'el

These are/were the journeys of the children of Israel

asher yatz'u me'erezt Mitzrayim

who went out of the land of Egypt

l'tziv'otam b'yad-Moshe v'Aharon

by their armies under the hand of Moshe and Aharon

[Numbers 33:1]

The Inspired Writer of Torah then informs us that during the 38 ½ years of wilderness adventure which followed the *Exodus* Moshe kept *a journal* – a set of *memoirs* as it were, in which he recorded for posterity the name of each and every place the Redeemed Community pitched tents. The exact words the Divine Writer uses are:

Vayichtov Moshe et-motza'eyhem l'mas'eihem
Moshe wrote their goings out according to their journeys

al-pi Adonai

by the word/instruction of the Holy One
[Numbers 33:2(a)].

Moshe's diary, as I call it, offers us much, much more than a touching, nostalgic trip back down memory lane. What we find in that journal are the “*journeys*”, the “*travels*”, the *times of striking tents*”, and/or the “*points/places of departure*” which made up our ancestors’ ***prototypical return*** to the land of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov.

Yes, I used the term *prototypical*. I guess I could not resist spilling the beans.

You see, Dear Reader, *prototypical* means *not merely historical*, but also ***prophetic of something yet to come***. *Prototypical* means *a real event of times past based upon the choreography of which an even more glorious future event is Divinely-programmed to occur at a ‘book-end’ date at the far end of the Holy One’s prophetic timetable*.

v'eleh mas'eihem l'motza'eyhem

and these are their journeys according to their goings out.

Vayis'u meRamses b'chodesh ha-rishon

They traveled from Ramses in the first month,

b'chamishah asar yom

on the fifteenth day of the first month;

l'chodesh ha-rishon mimachorat ha-Pesach

on the next day after the Pesach

* * *

UMitzrayim mekabrim

while the Mitzrim were burying all their firstborn,

et asher hikah Adonai bahem kol-bechor

The firstborn among them whom the Holy One had struck:

uveloheyhem asah Adonai sh'fatim

When the Holy One executed judgments upon their gods.

Vayis'u b'nei-Yisra'el meRamses

The children of Yisra'el traveled from Ramses,

V'yachanu b'Sukot
and encamped in Sukkot
[Numbers 33:3-5]

For those with ears to *sh'ma* what our ancestors did four thousand years ago established the pattern the Holy One has foreordained that we – or our children - will follow in the end of days.

The steps they trod will be trod by us – or our children – as well.

There will soon be a great ingathering of all the lost Children of Israel, as it is written:

*"...the days are coming, declares the Holy One,
when men will no longer say.
'As surely as the Holy One lives who brought the Israelites
up out of the land of Egypt', but
'As surely as the Holy One lives, who brought the Israelites up
out of the land of North
and out of the countries where He had banished them.' "*
[Jeremiah 16:14-15]

* * *

*Behold I am bringing them from the north country,
and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child
and she who is in labor with child, together;
a great company, they shall return here.*
[Jeremiah 31:8]

The main differences between the first Exodus and the 2nd Exodus will be that the routes we travel the next time will not be along a circuitous route, will not consist of ‘wandering’, and will not be through miles and miles of dusty desert but alongside *streams of water*. For the prophet says clearly:

*With weeping they shall come, and by supplication I will lead them;
I will make them walk by streams of waters,
on a straight path³ in which they shall not stumble;
for I am a father to Israel.*
[Jeremiah 31:9]

And it is further written by the prophet Yeshayahu [Isaiah]:

*"It shall be on that day that a great shofar will be blown,
and those who are lost in the land of Ashur*

³ Unlike the first Exodus the Second Exodus will not be along a circuitous route, and will not consist of ‘wandering’. Likewise, our trek will not be through dusty desert, but alongside streams of water.

*and those who are cast away in the land of Mitzrayim
will come, and they will bow before the Compassionate One
on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."*

[Isaiah 27:13]

* * *

*I will say to the north, "Give Them Up!"
And to the south, "Do Not Hold Them Back"
bring my sons and daughters from the ends of the earth.*

[Isaiah 43:6]

The latter-days' journeys of the Holy One's people will probably not begin in the physical land known as Egypt. But they almost certainly will begin in lands much like Egypt in many ways. They will almost certainly begin in lands appropriately called *Mitzrayim* [straights, oppressions] in the Hebrew tongue. They will almost certainly begin in lands pre-occupied with death, ruled by men with hardened hearts full of fear and loathing of the Holy One's people.'

Look around yourself, Dear Reader. Do you live in such a land? If not, at the present rate what do you think the land in which you live in will be like in 5 years? In 10? In 25? In 50?

It is perhaps time we all learned the secret of *the 42 stations* of parsha Massei.

The Secret of the 42 'Stations'

Altogether there are 42 places listed by Moshe where the *Radiant Cloud of the Holy One's* Presence rested and thus where the community of the Redeemed was called upon by the Holy One to set up tents and sojourn. I call those places our '*42 stations*'.

What's so significant about that?

Well, let's consider the number of stations. The sages consider the number 42 (six times the perfect number of 7) to be a very significant number. The number six [Hebrew *shesh*], of course, usually is considered the number of man – especially the human condition after the Fall. The other multiplier in the multiplication resulting in a factor of 42, the number seven [Hebrew *sheva*], on the other hand, is considered by many to be the "number of God". In Hebraic thought it represents *the Presence of the Holy One*.

Could it be that the 42 *massei'im* thus represent, to this way of thinking, *42 developmental steps for a redeemed person to transition from a carnal state to a point of readiness to enter into the threshold of the fullness of the Holy One's*

*Presence?*⁴

Does each of the 42 places represent both a separate *Divinely planned encounter between the Divine Bridegroom and His People*, and a separate *Divinely-planned revelation to His People of some unique aspect of the Holy One's nature and character*?

Some sages believe there are mystical clues in the Hebrew names of the 42 encampments mentioned in today's aliyah. Feel free to search that matter out for yourselves if you have the time. Whether or not there are mystical clues in the Hebrew names recorded by Moshe, however, one thing is clear - the decision of where to camp was not made by Moshe, nor by the priests, nor the Sanhedrin, nor the tribal elders, nor by vote of the people. The location and the duration of each encampment were determined by the Holy One of Israel alone – when He caused the pillar of fire and cloud representing His manifest Presence to stop and hover over a particular location rather than merely passing by.

Whenever the cloud moved, as you recall, the people of the Holy One moved. And whenever and wherever the cloud stopped, the people of the Holy One stopped. And then, however long the cloud remained, the people of the Holy One encamped.

Do you now see, Beloved? The 42 places the children of Israel camped were by no means the run-of-the-mill arbitrary '*this-looks-like-a-good-place*'-type campgrounds such as we have experienced in our lifetimes. They were, instead, strategically pre-planned 'development stations' in the desert, designed and prepared by the Holy One for Israel before the foundation of the world.

The presence of the *Radiant Cloud of the Presence* and the encampment of the Beloved of the Holy One no doubt changed the atmosphere of those places forever. And those places, and the events that occurred there, likewise changed the spiritual DNA of the Beloved of the Holy One forever.

The Holy One did not select the camping grounds by chance, or merely according to convenience. The Holy One carefully, lovingly, and wisely planned each one – and even choreographed the challenges we encountered in connection with each

⁴ Lest we think, at the point of the 42nd station that we have fully attained, however, keep in mind that there yet remain 7 more steps - to reach 7x7, or 49 - on the *other side of this threshold*. After all, the 42 stations described by Moshe merely took B'nei Yisrael from Egypt to the plains of Moav. Beyond this were Gilgal, Yericho, the Valley of Achor, Ai, Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim, and then to Gibeon, etc.

one – well in advance of our ever leaving Egypt.

Likewise the Holy One plans the “camping places” of your life and mine. The Holy One knows where we *have* camped, and where we *will* camp – ***if we learn to sense, and follow, the Cloud.***

Let us not settle, as did the Gadi and Reuveni, for taking up permanent residence in what the Holy One intended as merely a campground.

Campgrounds can be nice – but they are not HOME.

One Last Look Back – At What We Have Faced, Overcome and Left Behind

Some of the *massei* [encampments] Moshe lists in his prophetic journal we remember well from our reading of the Torah. We associate the names of those places with specific events that happened while the people of God camped there – specific *mercies that the Holy One showered upon His people*, specific *sins committed by the people*, specific *actions [or failures to act] of Moshe, Aharon, etc.*, specific *plagues*.

Ramses, the opulent store city that our forefathers built for Pharaoh with precious sweat and tears and blood, we remember.

Sukkot, the plain and simple place of open-air booths where we first paused to enjoy our first meal as free men, eating the *matzah* we threw together in haste the morning after the Passover, we remember.

The ***Sea of Reeds***, where we stood and saw the salvation of the Holy One, we remember.

Marah, where the Holy One turned bitter waters sweet for us, and where He taught us the first *chukim* [ordinances] and *mishpatim* [judgments] of Torah⁵, we remember.

Refidim, where water began to pour forth from a rock for us, and where we first experienced war with Amalek, we remember.

Sinai, where we heard the Voice of the Bridegroom of Heaven, received the Torah as a *Ketuvah*, sinned with the golden calf, and built the ***Mish'kan*** [Tabernacle] we

⁵ See Exodus 15:25.

remember.

Kadesh, where we cowered in fear at the report of the 10 spies, and lost our focus and our nerve, we remember.

Mount Hor, where we buried Aharon, we remember.

In such cases the mere mention of the name by Moshe conjures up memories and emotions in us – much like the mention of Plymouth Rock, or Valley Forge, or Gettysburg, or the Little Big Horn, or Woodstock today conjure up memories and emotions in most Americans.

The point is that *human beings have been given the unique ability to associate places with events.*

Can you think of Pearl Harbor, Auschwitz, Normandy, Waterloo, Iwo Jima, My Lai, Entebbe, Mogadishu or the World Trade Center, to name a few, without thinking of what happened there, and what the events that happened there reveal about our frail humanity - and about our need for a covenant with God?

Do you not likewise always remember the place you were born, the places you went to school, etc., the places you felt closest to God, and the places you “messed up” your lives the worst?

I wonder if you could count 42 of those divinely ordained “stations”? If not, you [and I] probably still have a few more to go!

And so as you review Moshe’s diary of the places we encamped ***b’midbar*** [in the desert] I hope the reading of the entries will not seem boring. I hope the names will not seem meaningless or foreign to you.

The sages teach us, you see, that each of us is to consider ourselves to have *personally* come forth with Moshe out of slavery in Egypt. That means, Dear Reader, that each of us is to personally experience the 42 “stations” of the wilderness, and the progressive revelation of the Holy One - and of our need of Him due to our own limitations - represented by each of the ***massei***.

***No Reason For Complaints; No Place for Offenses;
No Time for Regrets***

Several weeks ago in our studies, when our examination of *Sefer Bamidbar* began, this author introduced the adventure we were about to undertake as follows:

This *Sefer Torah* is going to be about how ordinary people, as well as honored leaders in the camp, respond to an extremely challenging obstacle course our Divine Bridegroom has designed for us all, to show who will - and will not - continue to love Him and *sh'ma* His Voice in the face of real life, real pain, real fear, and real sandal-meets-the-sand situations.

We will be called upon to test our newfound commitment to the Bridegroom in the heat and trials of the desert.

Gird up your loins – Torah is about to get very, very real. And we and the world are about to find out exactly what we - and all those who have been sitting around in peace and comfort engaging in 'God-talk' - are really made of.

It will not always be pretty. Indeed, what will come out of us will sometimes be so horrendously ugly that we will want to divert our eyes, tuck our tails between our legs and run as fast as we can back to Sinai – or even . . . dare we say it . . . *return to bondage in Egypt*.

Many of our present number will not complete the journey from Sinai to Nebo. And even for those who make it all the way to the plains of Moav the pathway we trod to get there will prove to be a very, very long and winding road.

But rest assured of this Beloved - it will be *worth it*. Every step. Every wound. Every scar. Every hard lesson of the wilderness. It will be worth it.

When we stand upon the plains of Moav a generation from now and stare across the Jordan River at the Bridal Chamber our Bridegroom has prepared for us it will be worth it all⁶.

⁶ See the Rabbi's son's *Introductory Study for Parsha #34, B'midbar*, at pp.1-2. The link to the on-line version of this study is: <http://regionschristiancenter.org/uploads/bill/pdfs/34%20-%20B%27midbar/34Intro74.pdf>

Well, here we are at the end of the great journey from Sinai to the plains of Moav. Walking with the Holy One through everything from lush green pastures to still waters to the barren wasteland of the valley of the shadow of death we have faced – and overcome – challenges that would have destroyed any other people. We have faced attacks from without, from within our own ranks, and from within our own fleshly hearts, minds and tongues. One by one the other people groups of the earth – occasionally in concert with one another - have stepped up to take their turn to try to intimidate us, annihilate us, confuse us, distract us, bully us, curse us, and seduce us. They have had partial success. But we have moved on rejoicing – and they have been left behind. Our Bridegroom-King has been with us every step of the way, leading us, loving us, protecting us, defending us, advising us, encouraging us, comforting us, teaching us, and even disciplining us – so we have met every challenge, and have transcended.

We are becoming more and more like Him.

We are not victims any longer. Nor are we just survivors. We are *overcomers* and *transcenders*.

We are no longer artful dodgers reacting on the fly to whatever circumstances we encounter – we are a force that shifts atmospheres and causes reactions everywhere we go.

We are enthusiastically embracing the new identity the Holy One has forged for us. We are excitedly embarking on the new mission He has ordained for us. And we are passionately pressing forward into the new destiny to which He has called us forth at such a time as this.

As we look back on the great adventure of our lives, how can we possibly indulge any regrets? The Creator of the Universe is our constant companion. He is to us a constant source of delight. He is our joy, our hope, our peace, and our ever-watchful guide.

Of course there have been setbacks. Sure there have been failures. Most definitely there have been sorrows. But seeing how far we have come, and how much we have overcome, in Him, through Him, and with Him, the reality is that there is no way we would change a single thing.

It has been *worth it* indeed, and a hundred times over – for **HE** is worth it all . . . and so much more.

Our new King and our new lives beckon us to leave the past behind, and move forward. There is simply no room in our new lives for complaints. There is now no place in our lives for wounds, grudges and offenses.

Our new lives are ahead of us, and the possibilities are limitless. There is absolutely no time or place in those new lives for unforgiveness or regret.

A Parsha Massei Travelogue

The initial focus of the final parsha of *Sefer Bamidbar* is stunningly retrospective in nature. Moshe wants us to always remember *where we came from* and *what the Holy One did in us at each way station along the way*. We can only keep our future focused on our destiny, and that of our children and children's children, if we have a revelatory perspective upon our past. Our exploration of this parsha is therefore the appointed time each year at which the Holy One introduces us to the journal He has had Moshe keeping relative to all the way stations we have encountered thus far on our odyssey. As soon as this brief retrospective concludes, however, the Holy One turns our focus squarely to the future. The last three chapters of the parsha are radically prospective in focus, laying out for us the first five primary assignments of the mission for which the Holy One has brought us to the precipice of the Inheritance to Avraham, to Yitzchak, to Ya'akov, and to their progeny forever.

Here is a summary of both the retrospective and forward-looking sections of the parsha in mildly expanded outline form.

1. The Retrospective Element: *The Precious Gift of Revelatory Perspective*

At the mere mention of the names of the places we visited – and where we sometimes danced, sometimes wept, sometimes soared to spiritual heights, and other times spiraled downward to spiritual depths - we find ourselves brimming with emotions ranging from nostalgia to grief to ecstatic joy. And the ***precious gift of perspective*** which Moshe's journal provides at this strategic point in our walk with the Holy One will both *heal us* and *inspire us*.

But this walk down memory lane is not all that is contained in parsha *Massei*. The Holy One will quickly turn our attention away from our past to the glorious future which awaits us the other side of the Jordan River.

2. The Prospective Element: **The Five Primary Assignments of the Mission To Which We Are Called**

A. Assignment #1 of the Mission – Evict, Purge, and Purify

First, the Holy One will prophetically declare over us that when we cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land our destiny is not merely to **displace the current inhabitants** of the land but to ***cleanse and purify that land***. He will instruct us to *search out and destroy all the idols and root out all the idolatrous altars* with which the prior inhabitants have polluted the land. The Holy One plans to use the land of Kena'an – reconstituted as *Eretz Yisrael* - as the stage for the Great Passion Play He intends to put on for the world – and a special, noticeable, and beautiful level of purity of both the land and its inhabitants is a critical element of His Script.

B. The Consequences of Failure to Complete Assignment #1

The Holy One will warn us that should we fail to ***sh'ma*** His Voice in this regard, and allow any of the land's idol-worshipping inhabitants to remain there, they will become to us as ***barbs in our eyes*** and ***thorns in our sides***. The 'show' – i.e. the Divine Passion Play He has written for this stage – will still go on; but the role we play in the drama will change dramatically. It is our choice – He has both alternatives covered.

C. Assignment #2 – The Build-Out Plan – Establishing the Boundaries

The focus of the narrative of *Massei* will then turn to the substance of the promise of the Promised Land itself. The Holy One will start by establishing with the Words of His Mouth the boundaries He intends the Bridal Chamber He has prepared for us to have.

D. Assignment #3 - The Apportionment Plan – Appointing the Allocation Team

The Holy One will then appoint specific men – by tribe and by name - to be in charge of dividing up the lands lying within those boundaries for purposes of inheritance. Yes, Y'hoshua and Kalev will be right at the top of this list.

E. Assignment #4 – Providing A National Infrastructure

The Holy One will then instruct us how to build a national infrastructure, designed to keep the tribes connected to Him, the Mish'kan, and each other. He will tell us to sprinkle 48 special *Levitical cities* throughout the land and then tell us to make 6 of them something He defines as ***arei miqlat*** – i.e. *cities of refuge*.

E. Assignment #5 – Approaching Every Life Decision From a Cross-Generational Perspective

Then, while the attention of everyone in the Camp is on inheritances in the Land of Promise, the Holy One will revisit the case of Tzelofechad's daughters. In order to assure that their father's inheritance remains in the tribe He will direct that they must marry only someone from their own tribe. As a result of this directive Torah will inform us that each of Tzelofechad's five daughters complied with that directive and took husbands from within their own tribe.

With this *Sefer B'midbar* will conclude, and our prophetic call will temporarily change from 'Battle Stations' to 'At Ease' - at least until Moshe gets that fire in his eyes and starts to release over us those torrents of fiery revelation and inspiration we call **D'varim** [i.e. *Deuteronomy*]!

A Look At The Haftarah

Jeremiah 2:4 – 4:1-2

In last week's haftarah we read about both *the call* and the *initial training* of Yirmayahu as the Holy One's prophet to the nations. In this week's haftarah we will take a look at his earliest oracles. In these early oracles we will see some themes developing which will reappear over and over again in the course of Yirmayahu's long ministry.

The first theme upon which the Holy One had His Prophet touch upon last week was the height and depth, and width and breadth of His deep, abiding, eternal covenant love for Israel. This overwhelming, unshakable, unstoppable love of an all-Wise, all-Powerful, all-Good Creator/Bridegroom/Husband/Covenant Partner is a central theme of all revelation. It is, indeed, the essential pebble in which every ripple of His Glorious Redemptive Plan for His Creation and for mankind finds its source. If He did not love Israel the way He loves her – with the tender but powerful, jealous but patient, never-ending kind of love He has chosen to indulge for her, there would be platform upon which to build a redemptive plan.

The second theme the Holy One has Yirmayahu address grows out of the first. The second theme is that that His amazing, all-surpassing love is given to people who do not – and could never - deserve or earn it. Both before encountering His incredible love and afterward the human beneficiaries of His kindnesses and compassions always eventually wind up waning in wonder, getting distracted, offended, self-righteous, complacent, and/or downright rebellious. Human vessels cannot ever get completely comfortable with Divine Love. They kick against the

goads. Undone by His Great Love for them, they make a covenant in the heat of passion – then they immediately begin a process of pulling away from it. At first they just pull away with their eyes, their hearts, their meditations, their passion, and their delights. And then they get verbal, complaining, murmuring, accusing, blaming, assailing. And finally they get physical – embracing other inferior lovers and other inferior pleasures.

But He loves them still. And He gives up on them never. And His watchful care over them never slumbers or sleeps.

And then the third major theme of Yirmayahu's prophetic download kicks in – it is the Great Lover's prophetic '*call to return*'.

This *call to return* consists, first of all, of *an alarm of awakening*. The Holy One offends the minds of men to reveal the heart of men. In Yirmayahu's case He will be told to compare His Beloved's attitude and conduct to everything from a *pagan nation* [Jeremiah 2:10-13, 15-18] to a *harlot* [Jeremiah 2:20] to a *rogue grapevine* [Jeremiah 2:21] to a *wandering camel* [Jeremiah 2:23] to a *female donkey in heat* [Jeremiah 2:24] to a *gang of thieves* [Jeremiah 2:26-27] to a *bride who forgot her wedding gown* [Jeremiah 2:32] to a voyeuristic wife who has given herself wholeheartedly to a series of other lovers instead of to Her husband [Jeremiah 3:1-5].

The call then shifts emphasis, to the heart of the message – i.e. the actual call to lift our eyes and meet with the Holy One Himself as a Persona. He has to awaken us to the ugly details of the mess we are in order to coax us out from behind the make-shift garments of fig leaves and the lies with which we have covered ourselves and talk with Him face-to-Face. Once He gets us to respond to the 'come to Me' part of the call however, the Holy One is completely confident in the ultimate result. He has complete faith in His irresistible winsomeness. He is absolutely sure of His power of attraction. He knows that if we will just once fix our eyes upon Him – instead of talking about Him like He is not in the room the way adulterers do - we will once again be overcome with love. He knows that no human being He has ever redeemed from bondage – no matter how long ago or far away that redemption took place - can ever actually look at Him in His Majesty – much less hear His Beautiful Voice, smell His Intoxicating Fragrance, or feel His tender, life-giving Touch - and not melt before Him. He knows that deep down we whose lives He has once touched with His Love will, when awakened from their distraction and slumber, realize that we have always loved Him, have always needed Him, have always wanted Him, and will never be satisfied with anything

but Him.

That is when the third element of the great prophetic ‘call to return’ kicks in. Once we have again seen Him for Who He is, and have again received His love, then and only then He calls upon us to repent of and turn away from any and all people, substances, attitudes, opinions, philosophies, ideologies, priorities and behavior patterns associated with our adultery, idolatry, and folly.

Finally, the fourth element of the prophetic ‘call to return’ is caused to shine forth. This is the part where the Holy One makes glorious promises of restoration to the ones who have heeded His call to return and repent. We never really ‘give up’ anything of value to reconcile and reunify with the Holy One. The joy of knowing Him and the pleasure of walking with Him, and the things He has planned for us, are vastly superior to anything – or any relationship – that He calls us to leave behind along the journey.

A Quick Look at Some Related Apostolic Scriptures

James 4:1 –12

In the passages we will read this week from the B’rit Chadasha to correspond with our studies in parsha *Massei* the ‘battle stations’ theme of last week will take a slightly different twist. We will hear on more subtle issues of spiritual warfare from Messiah’s half-brother *Ya’akov*, who was later renamed by English speakers as ‘James’.

Ya’akov will speak to us plainly about the root causes of all dissension within the Redeemed Community. He will then exhort us:

*Be subject therefore to the Holy One.
But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
Draw near to the Holy One, and he will draw near to you.*

*Cleanse your hands, you sinners;
and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
Lament, mourn, and weep.
Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom.
Humble yourselves in the sight of the Holy One, and he will exalt you.
Do not speak against one another, brothers.
He who speaks against a brother
and judges his brother, speaks against the Torah, and judges the Torah.*

[James 4:6-11]

Ya’akov wants us to understand that the good fight of faith we are called to wage hand in Hand with the Holy One is by no means over – and that our assigned

mission in the campaign starts with becoming part of the Great Resistance movement. We must subject ourselves daily to the Holy One – and resist the adversary at every turn. The five most important areas of resistance are identified as the **hands** [i.e. our activities and pursuits], the **heart** [i.e. our attitudes, opinions, affections, desires, and delights], the **emotions** [i.e. what we allow to make us sad, happy, anxious, afraid, at ease, etc.], the **tongue** [i.e. what we choose to talk about and the level of blessing and hope – or toxicity – we release into the world], and **the Torah** [i.e. His revelation regarding the way in which man in Covenant with Him should think, speak, and interact with Him, with Creation, and with fellow man].

*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 #18, ***Tzuri v'Goeli*** [My Rock and My Redeemer]

Adonai tzuri v'goeli, oshe shalom bim'romaiv

O Holy One, 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

Yehi ratzon m'l'fanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu

May it be Your Will, our God, and God of our Forefathers

Sheiyibaneh bei ha-mik'dash bim'harah v'yomeinu

That the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days

v'ten chel'qeinu b'toratecha

And grant us our portion in Your Torah

v'shom navad'cha b'yirah

And we will serve you with reverent fear

Kimei olam uchshonim qad'moniot

As in days of old and in former years

V'or'vah l'Adonai min'chat y'hudah v' Y'rushalayim

And may the grain of Y'hudah and Y'rushalayim will be pleasing to the Holy One

Kimei olam uch'shanim qad'moniyot

As in days of old and in former years.