

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Massei:*** **Numbers 34:16 – 35:8**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 2:20-28**
 B'rit Chadasha: **James 4:7-8**

... *divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Kena'an.*
[Numbers 34:29(b)]

Today's Meditation is Job 36:13-14;

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

Under the hand of the Kena'ani the glorious land of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov has become a toxic waste dump of spiritual confusion, deception, and perversion. It is screaming for deliverance. It groans in eager expectation.

It is our assigned task, following the lead of the Holy One, to *walk in, take over, clean up the mess, and turn the bitter into sweet.*

The Nachalah Aspect of Ancient Covenants

Nachalah – often translated into English as ‘inheritance’ - is a term based in *covenant*. It describes an aspect of *covenant relationship* and *responsibility*. Since modern Westerners do not understand covenants they cannot understand the concept of a *nachalah*. So let us see if we can build a frame of reference.

A covenant is a forward-looking relationship agreement. The stronger covenant partner, called the *Suzerain*, commits himself to provide protection, provision, and nurture to the weaker covenant partner, called the *Vassal*. The weaker covenant partner commits himself to seek no other protector, provider or nurture, and to do everything the Suzerain directs, whenever and however the Suzerain directs him to.

That is where *nachalah* comes in. Sometimes a Suzerain covenants with a Vassal to conditionally place some item of valuable, potentially fruit or income producing property in the stewardship of the weaker covenant partner for a period of time and under conditions that the Suzerain sets forth. An incidental benefit may flow to the Vassal, but the arrangement is primarily for the benefit of the Suzerain and the expansion of His dominion and reputation.

¹ All rights with respect to this publication are reserved to the author, William G. Bullock, Sr., also known as ‘the *Rabbi's son*’ Reproduction of material from any *Rabbi's son* lesson without permission from the author is strictly prohibited. Copyright © 2005 – 2014 William G. Bullock, Sr.

The item or opportunity that the Suzerain places in the stewardship of the Vassal – i.e. the *nachalah* - remains at all times the property of the Suzerain. Title to the *nachalah* never passes. The Suzerain can take it back any time he wants. He can choose to take it back and entrust it to someone else - for a season or forever - if he wants.

Even during the season when the *nachalah* is in the Vassal's care, however, he cannot treat it as his own. He cannot do with it what he wants. He can only do with the item what the Suzerain authorizes him to do with it. He can only use it for the purpose of expansion of the Suzerain's realm of dominion and reputation.

The Vassal must recognize the good and faithful stewardship of any *nachalah* entrusted to him by the Suzerain as an integral part of his Covenant undertaking, subjecting him to possible rewards and possible punishments.

The Nachalah of the Twelve Tribes of Inheritance

The special allotment of land in Israel which each tribe of inheritance was assigned was that tribe's *nachalah* from the Holy One. The members of each tribe and clan were stewards of the specific tracts of land allotted to their households. They could only use those tracts of land under the terms and conditions stipulated by the Holy One as Suzerain of the Covenant. Neither the tribe as an entity nor its individual members owned or had rights to alienate any portion of that land. The land remained the Holy One's. And any benefit the tribes or their members received from the entrustment of the land to them as a *nachalah* was purely incidental.

The arrangement was intended for the benefit of the Holy One, as a means to expand His realm of dominion and His reputation.

To whom much is given, much is required.

And that brings us to today's aliyah of Torah. The Holy One is about to turn the focus of His Redeemed Community to the procedural aspects of His plan for them to take possession of the Promised Land.

The Methodology and Appointed Agents of Apportionment

In the opening lines of today's aliyah the Holy One tells Moshe how He wants the various *nacholot* to be allocated amongst the households, clans and tribes of Israel. The Holy One will start by naming names. He will tell Moshe what specific men He wants him to appoint – tribe by tribe - to be in charge of parceling out the land. Elazar the High Priest, Moshe's successor Y'hoshua, and the ever-faithful and passionate Kalev, son of Yefunah, will be right at the top of this list.

The Holy One's instructions begin as follows:

Eleh shmot ha-anashim asher-yinchalu lachem et-ha-aretz

These are the names of the men who are to divide the land among you as an inheritance:

El'azar ha-kohen viYehoshua bin-Nun

Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun

Venasi echad nasi echad mimateh tikchu linchol et-ha-aretz

And you are to take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance

V'eleh shmot ha-anashim l'mateh Yehudah Kalev ben-Yefuneh

These are the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh
[Numbers 34:17-19]

Let's look at the three men with which the Holy One started His list of appointed decision makers.

First was Elazar, son of Aharon, the High Priest. Of course, he and his family had no direct interest in the allocation. He was of the tribe of Levi, and would own no inheritable rights in any land in Israel. But he and his brethren and heirs had a very serious indirect interest in who was to live where in the land. His tribe was going to be financially dependent – and the welfare of the nation and the safety and operation of the Mish'kan was going to be affected greatly by – upon the productivity and prosperity of all the other tribes.

Secondly was Y'hoshua, of the tribe of Efrayim. But he was not appointed as a representative of that tribe. That honor went to a man named *Kemuel*, son of Shaftan. **Numbers 34:24.** Y'hoshua's participation was to be from the standpoint of the designated ruler of the nation and commander of its armies. He was also a veteran of the spying out of the land which occurred 38 ½ years previously. He could be counted on to approach the division of land amongst the tribes and clans in terms of defensible borders, military strategy, and effective natural resource distribution.

Thirdly, was Kalev, of the tribe of Y'hudah. He was a representative of his tribe. But he was also so much more. Not only was he, like Y'hoshua, familiar with the land already as a veteran of the spy adventure in which he participated almost four decades ago, he was also the one man in the camp most wholeheartedly devoted to the Holy One and the Covenant. He could be counted upon to approach the division of the land from a standpoint of what division would most effectively keep the nation united and connected, geographically through functional roads and routes of pilgrimage, and in terms of passion, to the *Mish'kan* and the Abiding

Presence of the Holy One which manifested there and was to serve as both the brain stem and beating heart of the Bridegroom-King's holy nation.

The Nachalah of the Levi'im

The focus of the narrative of Torah then turns to the distinct *nachalah* that the Holy One, as Suzerain of the great Covenant of Redemption, has placed in the stewardship of the only non-inheriting tribe of His kingdom of priests and holy nation – i.e. the tribe of Levi.

The Holy One has heretofore in Torah instructed the Levi'im that they would have no part of the land of Israel as a *nachalah*. Instead, what they would be entitled to utilize as a *nachalah* was a share in the tithes presented by the 12 tribes from the produce of their respective **nachalot**.

Thus the livelihood of the Levi'im would always depend upon the well being (materially and spiritually) of the 12 tribes. And thus they were given a tremendous *built-in incentive to see all of Israel prosper!* Here is how the Holy One explained it to Aharon:

***To the sons of Levi, I am now giving all the tithes in Israel as a nachalah
This is in exchange for the work/service they perform in the Communion Tent.***

***the necessary service in the Communion Tent will be performed by the Levites,
and they will bear their guilt/sin***

***It is to be an eternal law for future generations
that [the Levites] not have any nachalah of land,
for it is of the tithes that B'nei Yisrael separate as an elevated gift for the Holy One
that I am giving the Levites for a nachalah.***

For the other tribes the land of Israel is to be their *nachalah* [i.e. the portion they receive and are responsible to steward for the Holy One's glory pursuant to Covenant]. But it was not so for the Levi'im.

The Holy One's Special Plan of Provision for the Levi'im

Nevertheless, the Holy One had a plan to provide the descendants of Levi with both a place to live and a small piece of land upon which to conduct a little agriculture in order to meet their basic human needs. Hence one of the things the Holy One instructed us to do when we entered into and took possession of *Eretz Yisrael* from the Kena'ani was to establish 48 specially designed 'Levitical Cities'.

These 48 cities, sprinkled here and there throughout the country, were provided to assure that the Levi'im would mix and mingle and conduct pretty normal interactions with all the other tribes. They were – are – to be the physical aspect of

the ‘glue’ which holds the nation of Israel together. The spiritual aspects of that ‘glue’ are the Covenant Faithfulness of the Holy One Himself, and the keeping and unifying power of His Torah.

Though the tribe of Levi did not receive any part of the land of Eretz Yisrael as an inheritance the Holy One wanted to make sure they did have some meaningful rights in and an intimate and abiding connection to the physical land of the patriarchs. Specifically, they were assured the right to live and raise basic livestock, grain and fruit produce within the walls of 48 cities located upon land allotted to the other tribes.

The 48 cities burdened with Levitical rights of residence were distributed throughout the country. The purpose of the cities of the Levi'im was to provide bases of operation from which the Levi'im could instruct each tribe and clan in the Covenant Ways of the Holy One.

The Holy One had a strategy, and the Levi'im were part of it. He purposed that the residents of each region of Eretz Yisrael, and each tribe and clan of the people, always have some clans of Levi'im in their vicinity with whom they could interact on a regular basis, who would be available to teach the Covenant Ways of the Holy One as set forth in Torah, and who would serve as a constant reminder of the Covenant connection between the tribes and the service of the *Mish'kan* [later, the Temple].

The people of the tribes were expected to fund the trips of the Levi'im that lived in their tribal allotment up to the *Mish'kan* [later, the Temple] for the celebration of the *mo'edim*. By scattering the Levi'im amongst all the tribes, both the financial burden and the spiritual opportunity inherent in this requirement of Torah were shared equitably.

Political, Judicial, and Economic Interests Served By the Establishment of Levitical Cities

Obviously, there were also political and governmental implications which flowed from the appointment of Levitical cities throughout the land. First of all, the Levitical desire to secure Israel's loyalty to the Holy One would also imply a commitment to promote the welfare of both the nation as a whole and the continued operation and prosperity of the Sanctuary which all the tribes shared.

The appointment of Levitical cities throughout all the tribal allotments also served a judicial function, as they would become known as the primary places to seek ‘justice in the gates’. It was to those cities that aggrieved individuals would come

in order to seek redress under the Torah for injuries and damages received at the hands of others.

There was also an economic factor involved. Since the Levi'im had no steady income, they were necessarily considered a 'protected class' in the same category with the local poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners, The 'Levitical cities' were the places where not only Levi'im, but all the other protected classes, could go to seek alms, glean in fields and orchards, and other Torah-mandated forms of economic relief.

Moreover, since the Levitical cities were all walled cities, they became the nation's major trade centers, centers of justice and education, and the first place to which the people of the region would flee in times of foreign invasion.

The legal status of Levitical houses within the specially appointed cities differed significantly from the property rights enjoyed by other Israelites. The fields and pasture areas utilized by Levi'im – which could only extend 2,000 cubits [i.e. approximately 3,000 feet] outward from the walls of the city - could never be sold (**Leviticus 25:32-34**). While an individual Levi might sell his right to occupy a house inside the city in order to raise funds, he always had the right to redeem that house at any time. Moreover, even if the house he had sold was not redeemed, all rights to its use reverted to the family of original Levitical possession in the year of *Yovel* [i.e. Jubilee].

Who Are 'Levites' Today – And Who Are Not

An interesting - but totally unScriptural - theological position has been advanced in recent years in some circles which actually equates Christian ministers and/or musicians with the 'Levites' of the Bible.

Wow – what a total fabrication. What a convenient little game of manipulation and sorcery.

As silly and innocuous as this seems, however, it is actually part and parcel of the much larger and far more pernicious theological premise often referred to as '*replacement theology*'. The idea, advanced by an astoundingly large segment of organized Christianity, appears to be that somehow – though the Bible says nothing whatsoever about it – [a] 'Israel' has been replaced by 'the church', [b] the *Mish'kan*/Temple of Scripture has been replaced by millions of local church organizations and buildings, and that as a result [c] the tithes that the Bible says should be paid to the Levites should now be paid to support these local church organizations and their leadership.

Hmmm. Have modern day preachers and church worship leaders given up the right to own property? Have they forsaken the right to pass on a material inheritance to their wives and children? Of course they have not. And even if they did, it still would not make them the equivalent of Levites.

Levi is a tribe, not a job.

Levi is a bloodline, not a ministry.

Levi is an identity, not a title or vocation.

It is solely as an incident to the anti-Semitic mantra which requires that everything Hebrew be replaced by something 'Christian' that the proponents of this scandalously unScriptural position seek to equate modern Christian ministers, musicians and singers with the Levi'im of the Hebrew nation. If they can sell this nonsense to the gullible, uninformed masses, they reason, they can also make those deceived masses believe that their 'Lord' – who is most definitely not the YHVH of the TaNaKh or the Y'shua of the apostolic Scriptures - actually commands them to set aside and pay tithes to them and their tax exempt organizations.

What a sham. What a blatant network of lies. Shame on them all. Heaven help them on the day of Judgment.

If you really want to know who the Levi'im of today are, the answer is simple. They are the very same people they always have been. They have not been replaced any more than Israel has been replaced by the religion of Christianity, or any more than the Temple in Jerusalem has been replaced by the millions of large and small local church organizations scattered throughout the world.

Levi'im are now, as they have always been and always will be, the natural descendants of Levi – i.e. the third son born to Ya'akov and Leah. Since there is presently no physical, functional Mish'kan or Temple in Israel, these Hebrews presently receive no tithes. Most live in the Diaspora, like ordinary citizens of Hebrew descent. Many probably do not even know who they are. But one thing is for certain, and that is that Christian ministry – and/or singing or playing an instrument in a local church organization or for a para-church ministry organization – have absolutely nothing to do with it.

One day there will be a *Mish'kan* or Temple again. When that happens, the Levi'im will voluntarily forego the right to own property or leave material

inheritances to their children, and will return to their assigned roles and status. They will return to, and take up their assigned places and functions in, the Levitical cities. And then, and only then, will they participate once again in receiving and giving tithes.

Questions for Today's Study

1. Here are some questions about the process the Holy One designed for the land of Israel to be allocated/divided.

[A] How many men were assigned to be responsible for the allocation?

[B] Why do you think Elazar the *kohen* [priest] – whose tribe would not inherit any of the land – assigned to head up the allocation team?

[C] Why do you think two representatives of the tribe of Efrayim – Y'hoshua and Kemuel - were appointed by the Holy One to be on this allocation team ?

2. Here are some questions to consider regarding the Levitical Cities the Holy One instructed Israel to establish.

[A] How many Levitical cities were there to be?

[B] What restrictions did the Holy One place upon the Levites' ownership, use, and sale of the lands in and around these 48 cities?

[C] In order to receive a portion of the tithes of the households of the other tribes of Israel, what rights that the persons in those households enjoyed did the Levites effectively have to 'give up'?

[D] Does anything in the Bible – be it the TaNaKh or the apostolic Scriptures – say or support the idea that Christian preachers, pastors, worship leaders, singers or musicians are modern-day 'Levites'? Explain your answer and your thoughts on this.

3. In today's assigned verses from this week's Haftarah the Holy One starts out by having Yirmayahu point out to His backslidden nation that she has '*laid down and played the harlot on every high hill and under every green tree*'. What do you think the Holy One means by this?

4. Next the Holy One has Yirmayahu compare His backslidden nation to 'a degenerate plant of an alien vine'. What do you think the Holy One means by this? Compare what kind of vine the Holy One had designed and empowered His Covenant People to become.

5. Next the Holy One has Yirmayahu compare His backslidden nation to '*a swift camel breaking loose in her ways*.' What do you think the Holy One means by this?

6. In today's suggested reading from the apostolic Scriptures *Ya'akov* [James], the half-brother of Y'shua, discusses two possible heart attitudes we can have toward the Holy One.

*Be subject therefore to the Holy One.
But resist the adversary, 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.*

[James 4:7-8]

[A] In verses 7-8 what five instructions does *Ya'akov* give to persons seeking to approach the Holy One? List them in the order given.

[B] Write a letter to the Holy One, in which you go through each of these instructions one at a time.

[C] What does *Ya'akov* say will happen if you *resist the adversary*?

[D] Give a practical example of what you think an episode of 'resisting the adversary' might look like in regard to a real issue you have faced or expect to face in life.

[E] What does *Ya'akov* say will happen if you *draw near to the Holy One*?

*May you find – and be a good and faithful steward of –
Each and every inheritance the Holy One has in mind for you.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today

Job 35:13-14 [The wise counsel of *Elihu*]

*Surely God will not listen to empty talk,
Nor will the Almighty regard it.
Although you say you do not see Him,
Yet justice is before Him, and you must wait for Him*