

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Mattot:*** **Numbers 31:1-24**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 2:1-3**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Philippians 3:15**

They fought against Midyan.

[Numbers 31:7].

Today's Meditation is Psalm 94:1-5,16-23;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #14, *V'al Neesecha* [And for the Miracles]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...
Neqom niqmat B'nei Yisra'el me'et ha-Midyanim – Blow forcefully to the fullest for
B'nei Yisrael in regard to the Midyanim Numbers 31:1-2a.

We are not one of the 'nations that rage'. We do not go around looking for trouble, picking fights, taking the territory, personal possessions, or peace of other nations by force, intimidation, or deception. We do not talk trash. We do not shake down. We do not grift. We do not rob, rape, pillage, and plunder. We choose the more excellent way. But even for us there are times – and sometimes seasons - when war is unavoidable. As we join the 'Great Nation Emergence' Narrative in progress today, we find ourselves in the throes of our times/seasons of war. Acting under the occult counsel of the sorcerer Bila'am, Midyan has attacked us. The weapons of warfare they chose were espionage, deception, and seduction. Through these they introduced a plague/pestilence into our camp that claimed the lives of 14,000 of our number. They have sown seeds of hatred and destruction; and under the law of sowing and reaping, everyone should have a pretty good idea what comes next. When they were offered the choice to bless the seed of Avraham through Ya'akov or curse them, they ghoulishly chose the latter. It is no secret that such a choice carries consequences. See Genesis 12:3 and Zechariah 2:8-9. Today's aliyah is all about those consequences. This aliyah begins with the Holy One instructing Moshe to:

Neqom niq'mat b'nei Yisra'el m'et ha-Midyanim

Naqam – naqam to the fullest - the children of Yisra'el in regard to the Midyani:

achar te'asef el-amecha

afterward you will be gathered to your people.

[Numbers 31:1-2]

Only once before has the Holy One said anything remotely similar to anyone. Exodus 17:16. He has made it clear that generally our Covenant calling is totally inconsistent with *naqam*-ing. At Sinai, He said specifically: ***You are not to naqam,***

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nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you are to love your neighbor as you yourself are loved. Leviticus 19:18. Other people – and other nations *blow off steam* – *i.e. naqam* – all the time. They aggress, trespass, oppress, harass, intimidate, manipulate, avenge, take revenge, and take vengeance with zeal. But us? As the Psalmist wrote: Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Psalm 34:13-14. And as Sh’lomo wrote in his training manual for princes and kings of the Covenant nation: ***Do not say ‘I will recompense evil.’*** Proverbs 20:22a.

But Wait ... If What Midyan Did Requires a Naqam Response from Us, What Does the Naqam-ing He has in mind Involve? What does Naqam-ing ‘The Creator’s Way’ Look Like and Consist of?

The literal meaning of the *nun-quf-mem sofit* shoresh [*i.e. naqam*] is to *breathe forcibly but calmly, with intentionality*. It means to take a deep breath, summon one’s strength and will, and then do whatever is necessary for the Kingdom Ecosystem to prosper in both the present and the foreseeable future. English translators, hopelessly addicted to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and who therefore always default to the basest forms of fleshly judgmentalism, have chosen to translate it as ‘*avenge*’, ‘*take vengeance*’, or ‘*take revenge*’. They do not see the Holy One as a wise Ecosystem Manager, macro-managing the Universe. They envision Him as being like them - getting ticked off like a spoiled child if/when human beings act out. They see Him reacting to attitudes and behaviors He did not see coming and getting all up in His feelings over it. The image Him working Himself into a frenzy of ‘*righteous rage*’, then delving out cruel punishments in a state of *aggravation, offense and negative emotion* – you know, the way flesh-driven humans obsess about doing. But hold on a minute. They do not understand either the Holy One’s *af²*, which they, being wrathful humans choose to translate as ‘*wrath*’; nor do they comprehend the redemptive nature of the Holy One’s *mishpatim*, which they, being hyper-judgmental reactionaries oozing the juices of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ choose to translate as ‘*judgments*’. They have no understanding of *wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, that produces the fruit of righteousness when sown in shalom by those who make/build shalom.* James 3:17-18.

But are bloody campaigns of vengeance really the Holy One’s way? Is angry

² *Af* [alef, feh sofit] is the Hebrew word most frequently translated into English as ‘anger’. It is a noun derived from the verb root *anaf* [alef, nun, feh sofit], literally meaning to breathe through the nostrils; hence to ‘snort’ like a bull or stallion. It is the making of an attention-getting sound to alert everyone around that what is happening is not deemed appropriate, and that a change needs to occur.

revenge even a part of a Creator/Redeemer's worldview? Is bloodlust and giving people who do bad things what they deserve and a whole lot more the Holy One's way? Is He really so easily triggered? Is He really just an emotional powder keg with a bad temper and a nasty God-complex – like most fallen human beings? The Holy One is not a human being, and He does not live – nor act – in the heat of the moment. He is an eternal being Who *sees the end of all things from the beginning*. We humans can never do anything that either catches Him by surprise – much less hurt His feelings. We just aren't that powerful. We just don't hold those cards. He does not react to individual men, movements, or nations – He manages His Ecosystem. He sees all things – and all people – through a Redeemer/Restorer's eyes. He knows all. He foresees everything that happens - and sets in motion a foolproof strategy to work it together with everything else that will ever happen for good before it happens. See **Romans 1:20-32 and 8:28**. Long before any Ecosystem-threatening event transpires, He sets in motion a series of damage-control protocols, societal healing schemes, and counter-balancing measures. He is the Captain of the Ship. He does not panic. He does not over-react. He maintains course, track, bearing, and heading – as well as perfect shalom, joy, and redemptive focus - at all times. He has complete, unshakeable confidence that He, the faithful remnant of Avraham's seed, and all that is good in His Beloved Creation will ultimately not only survive every encounter with 'evil' but will thrive despite it. He does not fly into a rage. He does not abandon His Grand Plan for the Redemption of mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to its original, intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom to temporarily play the role of a sadistic, all-powerful maniac who delights in inflicting pain and suffering on mortal human beings.

As should be clear by now, the Holy One does not take any delight whatever in the shedding of the blood of any of His Creations – especially man. He takes no pleasure in the death of even those we consider to be wicked. He only does what is necessary to protect His Covenant People because they play a key role in the management of His Ecosystem. He is not irritable; He is slow to anger. He is not judgmental; to the contrary, because He understands the frailty of the human frame and the challenges faced daily by the human heart and mind, He is the definition of mercy. He is never contentious, because He is all-powerful, and if He started a fight He knows the stakes for Creation would be too high. He knows no one can fight back against Him. No one – no nation, no kingdom – and no anti-Messiah or 'new world order' confederacy for that matter – would have even a hint of a chance to survive in such a conflict if He brought His full power to bear upon them as they deserve. He is not *'spoiling for a fight'*. He is, after all, the ultimate *elephant in every room*. He is omnipotent. He is omniscient. He is immortal. He is eternal. He holds the power of each man's life in His Hands at every moment. If

He were violent, or the least bit retributive or vengeful, we would all have been dead a long time ago. But He is none of those things. He is good. He is kind. He is faithful to His Creation – including, of course, fallen mankind – to the infinitive exponential power. And He is unswervingly patient, gentle, and wise.

Does the Holy One Get Angry the Way Human Beings Get Angry?

What do you think of the Holy One? Do you think He flies off the handle? Do you think He ‘loses His temper? Do you think He gets huffy? Do you think He is prone to rage? Do you think He gets offended? Do you think emotion can make Him lose self-control and do things He will – or should - later regret? Do you think He indulges in rants? Do you think He ever fumes? Goes postal? Has tantrums? Throws fits? Acts childishly? Pouts? Screams? Curses? Stomps around the Heavens? Throws things? Gets Himself all in a tizzy? Turns bitter? Consider the possibility that *what you allow yourself to think about the Holy One – the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, and the most wise, secure, end-game focused, and level-headed Being in the Universe - in this regard might just say a whole lot more about who YOU ARE, and how you behave when things do not go the way you want them to, than it ever could about Who He is or how He behaves when fallen men do just what fallen men have always done.*

The Holy One is omniscient. That means He knows everything that is going to happen, and how it will happen, long before it happens. He knows exactly why everything happens. He fully understands all primary, and all secondary, and all remote causes. He knows all persons, bloodlines, households, communities, nations, and generations will be affected that are going to be affected – and He knows how and to what extent each will be effected. He knows every single short term-ripple and long-term consequence that will flow from every event – long before the event unfolds. He is never, ever surprised, shocked, appalled, offended, or disgusted by anything. He simply cannot be any of those things. He knows all. He sees all. He understands all. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows He can work all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. He therefore *never gets outraged* – at least not in the sense mortal human beings do. In fact, He is never even [a] irritated, [b] annoyed, [c] angry, or [d] frustrated - at least in any way even remotely similar to the way human beings who fear losing control of people or situations, or being disrespected or betrayed, get irritated, annoyed, angry, and/or frustrated. While He does not delight in it, He is not – and cannot be - repulsed by human sin or weakness. He is not the least bit vindictive against humans – His Creation – when they sin against Him or each other. In every situation in which it is possible without jeopardizing His Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation He prefers to respond with mercy – or at most corrective discipline – as opposed to final judgment. He doesn’t want to kill those who rebel against Him – He wants all to come to *teshuvah*, and

for them to then be gloriously redeemed, reconciled, and restored. When a case is hopeless, however, He knows that too. And He knows, in every such case, what has to be done, and *when* it needs to be done, and *how* it needs to be done, to minimize the damage the unrepentant can inflict on their fellow man. Whatever is needed to minimize the damage done – to humanity and/or to Creation – that is what He does. We may not like it. We may not understand it. We may not agree with it or approve of it. But He doesn't really care. He does not solicit – or pay any attention to - either moral advice or ethical criticism from the likes of us. He knows He is only doing what is necessary. He is fully confident He is not being cruel.

In most situations the Holy One *abhors* – and therefore does not call his people to engage in – war³. It is not that He is a pacifist; it is that *His Plan is to offer redemption first – and to resort to punishment only when absolutely necessary for His Grand Redemptive Plan to continue forward*. Remember how He led our ancestors out of Egypt on a circuitous route *specifically in order to avoid a confrontation with the warlike Ph'lishtim [i.e. Philistines]?* And do you recall also if you will how more recently He had us bite our tongues, keep our cool, and back down submissively when the king of the Edomi played the bully and refused our overtures of peace and cooperation? Those situations both were apparently what *Sh'lomo* [Solomon] would in the book of *Kohelet* [Ecclesiastes] refer to as *times for peace*. Now, however, the Holy One shows us a totally different side of Himself. He tells Moshe in no uncertain terms to *choose an army and send His covenant people to war against the Midyani*.

This offends many. They do not understand that the Holy One in His omniscience, knows exactly when something stunning to the world simply has to happen – something that He knows will be interpreted by the fallen human mind as 'judgmental' – in order for His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation to its full Edenic Potential to proceed.

Poisoned by the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, men think they know – and can judge – things they see only through the tiniest of pinholes. Full of self-righteous pride, and eminently wise in their own opinions, they dare to judge God. They accuse their Creator of 'cruelty'. When He orders Moshe to *neqam niq'mat* Israel concerning the Midyani, or when He empowers Israel to cleanse the Promised Land of pollution by the Kena'ani, or tells all in Covenant with Him to consider ourselves at war with Amalek forever, they actually think He is 'just being vindictive' – and 'racist' to boot! They consider themselves far more intelligent than, and morally superior to, the Creator and Sustainer of all Life.

³ The word English Bibles translate as 'war' is the Hebrew noun *meil*, pronounced *meal-KHAH'-mah*.

They are prisoners of idealism, cynicism, and ideology. They do not know the Holy One at all – and hence they cannot understand – much less trust Him.

***Is There Really a Time for War as Well a Time Peace –
and a Time to Kill as Well as a Time to Heal?***

Please note that this is the first time the Holy One has ever instructed anyone to wage an offensive military campaign against anyone. We were not allowed to mount a military campaign against the Egyptians. We were not told to start a war against the dangerous Amaleki, or the aggressing Emori, or the people of Arad, or the obnoxious and provocative Edomi, or even the cunning, conniving Moavi.

Usually other nations and peoples – people like Pharaoh, Amalek, Arad, and the Emori - attack us ... not the other way around. We usually are called to play the role of '*the adult in the room*'. We usually are called to forebear responding in kind, or doing anything to 'get even'. Hence, heretofore we have limited military action to [a] *defending ourselves against vicious attacks aimed at our annihilation* and [b] *rescuing captives that those who hate us have taken from our camp*. This time it is going to be different. This time the Holy One tells Moshe to mount our first-ever offensive campaign. For the first time ever He is instructing His Covenant nation to take the role of an instigator of war. So ... what makes this particular moment in history a *time for war* instead of a *time for peace*, a *time to 'hate'* instead of a *time to love*, and, alas, a *time to kill* instead of a *time to heal*? Hmmmmn. I believe that this warrants some further inquiry, don't you?

***Who Are the Midyani Historically and Prophetically,
And What Is It That Makes War With Them Essential?***

Why has the Holy One ordained that our usual defensive-response was not – and can never be - the appropriate way to deal with the Midyani? Why must this particular nation, like the Amaleki, be considered too dangerous to the world to coexist with? The Holy One has made a covenant with Avraham and his descendant to bring about the redemption of mankind and Creation through them. Other people groups in the world have been given the choice of blessing Avraham and his descendants, and thereby receiving blessings through them, or cursing Avraham and his descendants, and thereby setting themselves squarely against the Holy One's Redemptive Plan. Which path has Midyan chosen? Their elders, princes, fathers, sons, mothers and daughters have as one man wholeheartedly bought into and joyfully embraced the plan of the Anti-Messiah figure of their day – a plan *to curse the descendants of Avraham*. They have chosen the pathway of *lethal toxicity*. They stand squarely in the way of the Redemptive Plan of the Holy One. The Holy One tried to help them by sending an angel to stop Bila'am from delivering the curses they hired him to deliver. But they refused the help. They

refused to heed a single one of the prophetic warnings that were clearly stated in Bila'am's oracles. They took matters in their own hands. They conspired to seduce the Bride-People away from their Bridegroom-King and His Grand Redemptive Mission. They now, along with the Amaleki and the Emori, represent the prototype of all people who will ever make, and refuse to turn back from, the choice of cursing Avraham's descendants instead of blessing them.

The word/name our English Bibles transliterate into English as *Midyan*⁴. The word is derived from the verb root *dalet, yod, nun sofit*, and referring to *discussion, debate, or argument*. Adding a *mem* [a pictograph of a flowing movement like unto a wave] to this word⁵ indicates a long-standing, ebbing and flowing, argument or debate – hence it is usually translated as “strife”. As you can see, therefore, the very name of the Midyani means strife. As the Egyptians were culturally fixated upon death, the afterlife, and everything having to do with the realm of the occult, and as the Edomi were culturally fixated on material possessions, fleshly appetites, and territorial domination, Midyani are culturally obsessed with *stirring up and profiting from* strife. They *thrive on conflict*. They *enjoy sowing – and then reaping the harvest from – seeds of dissension*. They *exist to start – and fan the flames of - drama*. Note, however, that to this point in the narrative of Torah the Midyani have not been portrayed as engaging in *armed conflict the way the Amaleki and Aradi and Emori are wont to do*⁶. That is because Midyani prefer a more insidious – and potentially even more dangerous - kind of oppression. They want to turn us *against ourselves* and *against our God*, and therefore cause us to release into the world the exact opposite of what the Holy One has called us to release. Because the Holy One has called us to receive and release *shalom*, the Midyani sow seeds of offense. Because the Holy One has called us to receive and release joy, the Midyani sow seeds of discontent. Because the Holy One has called us to release hope, the Midyani sow seeds of despair. Because the Holy One has called us to model self-control, the Midyani sow seeds of lust, greed, gluttony, and self-indulgence. Because the Holy One has called us to receive, embrace, and walk in humility, the Midyani sow seeds of pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness. Because the Holy One has called us to walk in love, the Midyani sow seeds of class envy, racial prejudice, gender-based manipulation, and hatred. Hmnnnnn - a very dangerous approach to life these Midyani have chosen for themselves! Let's go back to our first introduction to the Midyani and see if we can get a handle on why the Holy One thinks that going to war with them before we cross the Jordan to redeem the land of the Covenant from the perversions of the Kena'ani is our only

⁴ Midyan [often transliterated as *Midyan*] is spelled *mem, dalet, yod, nun sofit*. It is pronounced *meed-yawn*'.

⁵ In Hebrew grammar the addition of a *mem* prefix to a verb is often a sign of what we in English call 'present tense'.

⁶ This will change in *Sefer Shoftim* [the Book of Judges]. See **Judges 6:2**.

viable option.

The Midyani's Involvement in the Dispute Between Yosef and His Brothers

Our first introduction to the Midyani comes in connection with the story of Yosef [Joseph]. In Genesis 37 we are told:

*... there passed by **Midyani** merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Yosef out of the pit, and sold Yosef to the Ishmaeli for twenty [pieces] of silver*

*the **Midyani** sold him into Egypt unto Potifar, an officer of Pharaoh's, a captain of the guard.*

The Midyani of this world, it seems, *willingly participate in, and seek to profit from, the squabbles of others.* They traffic in human misery. They exploit the *offended people of the world* – and try to profit from their offenses.

The next time we see the Midyani in Torah is in Exodus 2. Another family squabble isolated Moshe from his people, forcing him to flee Egypt. Torah tells it this way:

*... two men of the Hebrews were fighting with each other.
He [Moshe] said to him who did the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow?"
He said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?
Do you plan to kill me, as you killed the Mitzrian?"*

*Moshe was afraid, and said, "Surely this thing is known."
Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to kill Moshe.
But Moshe fled from the face of Pharaoh, and lived in the land of Midyan*

[Exodus 2:13-15]

What happened as soon as Moshe arrived in Midyan? Torah tells us:

*... he sat down by a well. Now the Kohen of Midyan had seven daughters.
They came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.
The shepherds came and drove them away*

[Exodus 2:15-17]

In Hebrew the verb used to describe what the Midyani shepherds did to the seven daughter of Yitro is a violent one – *garash* [gimel, resh, shin]. This Hebrew verb means to *forcibly attack, drive away, and despoil.* This was not a playful competition. This was an act of violence and war – by a group of grown men against seven defenseless women. And let's look further:

*... but Moshe stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.
When they came to Reu'el, their father, he said,
"How is it that you have returned so early today?"
They said, "A Mitzrian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds,
and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock."*

He said to his daughters, "Where is he?"

Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

Moshe was content to dwell with the man. He gave Moshe Tzipporah, his daughter.

*She bore a son, and he named him Gershom,
for he said, "I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land."*

And Moshe kept the flock of Yitro, his father-in-law, the Kohen of Midyan.

[Exodus 2:18-22; 3:1]

Midyan has again exploited and profited from the strife of others. A previous generation of Midyani profited from Yosef's strife with his brothers. Now the descendants of the Midyani merchantmen who sold Yosef into Egypt profit from Moshe's strife with his kinsmen in Egypt. And this time a new aspect of Midyan's tactics is revealed – the *exploitation of its own women*. How did Yitro entice Moshe to stay with him? He *offered him his daughter, Tzipporah!*

Remember what strife and personal misery resulted from this. Miryam and Aharon – rightly or wrongly – never seemed to get over the fact that Moshe married a Midyani woman, and never seemed to be able to get along with Tzipporah. Note also that neither Tzipporah nor the sons she bore to Moshe ever became a part of Israel - no doubt causing Moshe much anguish.

Bringing It Up to Date

Which leads us, of course, to the most recent episode in Israel's long history with Midyan. When B'nei Yisrael encamped in Moav on the Eastern bank of the Yarden [Jordan] opposite *Yericho* [Jericho], Midyan joined forces with Balak of Moav to hire Bila'am the seer to 'curse' and thereby *enslave* Israel. When that did not work it was time for the oldest of Midyani tactics – the use of its beautiful women to entice men away from their true destiny and purpose in life.

Just as Yitro had used Tzipporah's beauty to entice Moshe years ago so the Midyani of this hour successfully used the beauty of Cozbi⁷ and others to entice Israel's princes away from the Holy One's plan for them. The result?

*Yisra'el abode in Shittim; and the people began to play the prostitute
with the daughters of Mo'av, for they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods;
and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. Yisra'el joined himself to Ba'al-Pe'or:
and the anger of the Holy One was kindled against Yisra'el.*

*Behold, one of the children of Yisra'el came
and brought to his brothers a Midyani woman in the sight of Moshe,
and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Yisra'el, while they were weeping
at the door of the tent of meeting. Moshe said to the judges of Yisra'el,
"Kill you everyone his men who have joined themselves to Ba'al-Pe'or."*

⁷ Cozbi is identified both by name and as a princess of Midyan in Numbers 25:15. Her consort, Zimri, is identified by name and as a prince of Sh'mon in Numbers 25:14.

Those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.
[Numbers 25:1-3, 5-6, 9]

Perhaps now you can understand why the Holy One says there is *no possibility of living in peace with these people*. Hence in parsha *Pinechas* the Holy One said:

Tzaror et ha-Midyanim v'hikitem otam

'Attack the Midianites and smite them

Ki tzorerim hem lachem

since they attacked you

b'nichleihem asher-niklu lachem al-devar Pe'or

through their plot with Peor,

v'al-devar Kozbi vat-nesi Midyan

as well as through their sister, Kozbi, daughter of a Midianite prince,

achotam ha-mukah b'yom ha-magefah al-dvar-Pe'or

who was killed on the day of plague that resulted from Peor.'

[Numbers 25:17-18]

There is a *time for peace* ... but there is also a *time for war*. And now, the Holy One knows, even if we do not, is a time for war. He did not start it. His people were not the aggressors. But if this threat to the Divine Plan is not dealt with – and dealt with decisively – the damage done to Creation and to the people of this and the next few generations will be too great. It is not hate of Midyan that makes this war necessary; it is love for mankind and Creation. If we do not go to war now, the Holy One knows, the world He loves will pay a price at the hands of the Midyani that is simply too horrible to comprehend. Humans cannot see this – but *He can*. And for any man to demand peace in *such a time as this* would be shortsighted – and a complete failure of leadership. This war will not be about ‘vengeance’ in an English language sense. Nor is it about ‘national honor’. Nor is it about acquiring land and natural resources. Much less is it about retribution or punishment. This war, at this time, is simply necessary. It has to happen if humankind and Creation are to be preserved in a redeemable state. The Redemptive Plan of the Holy One having been put at risk, this is no time for human idealism or philosophical debate. ***Battle stations***, everyone!

A Divinely-Decreed Season of Strategic Strikes Against Those Who Cause Human Suffering Through Sowing Seeds of Dissension

According to our English Bibles what Moshe was instructed to do with regard to the Midyani was to “*avenge*” for B’nei Yisrael. **Numbers 31:2**. When Moshe spoke about this to the people, he reframed the narrative, recasting *avenging B’nei Yisrael* as ‘*avenging*’ the Holy One. **Numbers 31:3**. What did not change in Moshe’s directive was the verb. Both when the Holy One spoke and when Moshe spoke the

verb used was *naqam*⁸. It literally means to “*breathe forcibly*” – hence it refers to *exert oneself mightily in a task or endeavor* – especially in a task or endeavor designed to move an obstacle or blockage out of a path and restore a *state of functionality, fruitfulness, and shalom*. But is there perhaps a difference between what the Holy One’s *naqam* looks like and consists of and what the *naqam* of mortals - in this case, B’nei Yisrael - looks like and consists of?

Why would the Holy One resort to *naqam-ing*? What warning is it that He giving mankind? Well, keep in mind that, as we discovered in the course of our readings relative to Kayin’s slaying of Hevel [Abel], spilled human blood has a “voice” – a voice that cries out to the Holy One for justice. To *naqam* is simply to *respond* to the voice of that spilled blood. With the Holy One, *naqam-ing* is what one covenant partner does for another; not a product of human emotion or outrage. After Kayin slew *Hevel* [Abel] the Holy One put a mark on Kayin to warn anyone who would attempt to kill him in order to avenge [i.e. *naqam*] Hevel’s death to leave Kayin alone. And at that time the Holy One said: *If anyone kills Kayin naqam is to be released on him sevenfold*. Genesis 4:15. For the Holy One, *naqam-ing* is part of His covenant undertaking. It serves as a kind of ‘*private property, no trespassing*’ warning sign to all persons/nations outside the covenant who might be considering doing His covenant partners harm.

For mortal men and nations, there is a fleshly, emotional, and pseudo-intellectual temptation to take *naqam-ing* far beyond its covenant-affirming purpose. Men and nations are tempted to take ‘vengeance’, which they like to term ‘getting justice’, according to his own ‘fruit of the tree of knowledge’ poisoned misconceptions of what is *right and wrong, moral and immoral, and/or good or evil*.

The circumstances, manner, and timing of *naqam* are therefore properly reserved for the Holy One alone. Any man who presumes to take vengeance for himself –his family, his clan, his tribe, his nation, his religion, his ethnicity, etc. - therefore does so at his own peril. He is reaping something he and his children and children’s children will sow. The fate of men who choose to do such a thing is, in the Holy One’s eyes, seven times worse than Kayin’s murder of Hevel.

For those of us who are called to *live by the Voice*, wielding a sword in one’s own strength and one’s own timing, for one’s own purposes, is an act of blatant idolatry. Such a presumptive act places ones’ self in the throne of God – a place He alone should occupy. And it takes upon our human flesh the scepter of God – an instrument that He alone should wield. The use of offensive force is reserved for very, very special and unique circumstances. And when it is Divinely decreed, it is

⁸ Naqam is *nun, kuf, mem*. Strong’s Hebrew word #5358, it is pronounced *naw-kam*’.

not for an individual or even an offended clan or tribe, acting out of passion – it is for the entire nation, acting in concert, deliberately, as one man. The people who will be sent out on this limited mission are not a mob of outraged vigilantes, extremists, jihadists, arrogant expansionists, or self-righteous bigots – they are people who have been called, empowered, and carefully and lovingly trained to be holy as the Bridegroom-King is holy in everything they do – including waging warfare. They will not wage war out of anger. They will not wage war for spoil. They do not wage war for personal honor or for national glory. They will not wage war as other armies do. They are on a very, very tight rein. They operate only as and to the extent the Redemptive Plan of the Holy One require it for the ultimate good of mankind.

Every *neqam niq'mat* directive of the Holy One is subject to a very delicate and sensitive scale of authorized quality and quantity. We are never to go to war unless we have His Heart, His Mind, and His rules of engagement. Either *one blow too few* or *one blow too many* by us upon our enemies will tip the delicate scales of justice in a disastrous way – and will cause the blows we deliver inappropriately to rebound back upon our own heads. It is His Redemptive Plan that must be at the forefront of all military operations – not the advancement of our national interest or prestige. Hence, Moshe was not to call a mob together to go inflict vigilante ‘justice’ on the Midyani for their causing the great plague of Ba’al-Peor. Only 12,000 specially selected men were to be sent out. In the Hebrew texts what Moshe was told to have this strike force do was *naqam niq'mat* Midyan for the children of Israel. The doubled-form of the verb *naqam* describes a Hebraic concept that describes a characteristic of the Holy One we would all do well to understand. We may all be called upon in the future to participate in the Holy One’s ultimate day of *neqam niq'mat*.

Only men wholeheartedly surrendered to walking in Covenant with the Bridegroom-King, who respect the exquisite delicateness of the scale of *neqam niq'mat*, can be trusted by the Holy One to act with His amazing skill of surgical precision instead of engaging in senseless, emotion-driven overkill. Only those who know and love the Ways of the Holy One can be trusted to inflict the exact amount of judgment He has ordained and not one blow more. Only those who know and flow in the Divine Characteristics of mercy, compassion, patience, self-control, and wisdom can be trusted to stop swinging the sword or inflicting harm the instant the Bridegroom-King says to stop. Alas, our enemies will never understand this. But may Heaven help us if *we ourselves* ever forget it.

A Spiritual Assignment

Hence the assignment given Moshe – to *neqam niq'mat* B'nei Yisrael was not as

much a *military* assignment as it was an *ecosystem adjustment* assignment. The timing and the objectives of this operation were not based upon military considerations but were planned from the beginning of time, as a necessary part of the Holy One's Redemptive Purposes. The time for those tempted to follow the counsel of Bila'am to experience *naqam* was *now*.

Moshe received the Holy One's instructions to make war on Midyan without flinching. He took upon himself both the Holy One's *passion* and His *sense of urgency*. Moshe called upon the leaders of each tribe to conscript 1,000 men to "execute the Holy One's *niqmat*" upon Midyan. He then directed the people to:

Hechaltzu me'itchem anashim l'tzava veyihyu al-Midyan

'Detach men for armed service against Midyan,

latet nikmat-Adonai b'Midyan

so that the Holy One's nikmat can be had in Midyan

[Numbers 31:4]

From a pool of well over 600,000 battle-aged Hebrew men an elite 12,000 man 'special force' was chosen to execute the Holy One's *niqmat* on Midyan – just as the Holy One instructed. As Torah puts it:

Vayimasru me'alfei Yisra'el

From the thousands of Israel,

elef l'mateh shneym-asar elef chalutzei tzava

1000 volunteered (or were chosen) from each tribe - 12,000 special troops.

[Numbers 31:5]

The Marching Orders of our First Offensive Operation

The campaign to be undertaken against Midyan was not to be an ordinary "war". Everything about this operation was to be *supernatural*, not military. Why? Because military might or strategy [the way of the sword wielded by man in his own strength and for his own purposes] can never vindicate the Name of the Holy One, bring Him glory, or effectuate His Plan of Redemption for mankind and Creation.

The Holy One does not need us or anyone else to fight His battles. If we insist on fighting His battles, we will bring glory - if at all - only to *ourselves*. For the Holy One to receive glory what is necessary is a display of *supernatural might* - not the strength of man. That is why *only a supernatural leader* - one who speaks to the Holy One "*face to face as a man speaks to a friend*" - *is qualified to wage a supernatural war*. Y'hoshua was not yet ready for such an assignment. Alas, he was yet to have his encounter with - and learn the ways of the Holy One from - the Captain of the Hosts of the Holy One! Who then was ready? Moshe was ready. Moshe knew what it meant for someone to dishonor the Name of the Holy One. He

had, after all, done it himself many times – most recently at *Merivah*. Moshe knew how zealous the Holy One is for His Name to be vindicated – he had seen the plagues the Holy One sent upon Egypt and upon those among the Redeemed who rejected the Holy One’s inheritance.

Now Moshe saw that Midyan had torn the hearts of many of the Holy One’s people away from the grand enterprise of loving the Holy One to the disgusting futility of chasing Midyanite women around Midyanite idol-worshipping ceremonies. Midyan had thus said that the Holy One was not enough for Israel or for Midyan - and that the covenant Israel had with the Holy One was of no consequence.

The Holy One would not let a superior armed force do His work for Him. He would perform this necessary Ecosystem Management exercise by His own outstretched arm and mighty Hand.

Where Is the Man Who Will Go For Us?

Moshe did not send Yehoshua, the commander of the army of Israel, to lead the seed of Avraham into the clean-up operation. He instead sent Pinchas, the young man who had proven himself to be full of zeal for the Holy One’s honor.

Vayishlach otam Moshe elef lamateh l'tzava otam

Moshe sent forth the 1000 men from each tribe as an army

v'et-Pinechas ben-El'azar ha-kohen

along with Pinechas son of Elazar the priest,

l'tzava uchlei ha-kodesh v'chatzotzrot ha-tru'ah b'yado

who was in charge of the sacred articles and signal trumpets.

[Numbers 31:6]

The men who went on the *naqam niq'mat* mission against Midyan were not bloodthirsty warriors trying to make a name for themselves or earn any reward in either this world or the afterlife. Nor were they vigilantes out on a rampage to take revenge for family members and friends lost in the plague brought on by Midyan’s conspiracies with Moav and Bila’am. They were in fact not warriors at all. They were merely *witnesses* – embedded *witnesses* sent to provide eyewitness testimony concerning what the Holy One did. These men were chosen from all tribes so they would be able to report to their own kinsmen the miraculous intervention of the Holy One - how the Holy One Himself, not them, had vindicated His Name.

Take note, if you will, that *not a single man of the special force chosen by Moshe died*. Though this specially chosen force numbering only 12,000 attacked a force of possibly as many as 100,000 men of fighting age [gauging from the totals of women and animals captured], it was the much larger Midyani force that was destroyed, while

the much smaller Hebrew force suffered not a single casualty. Notice as well that Torah's account of this confrontation contains not one tale of *individual heroism*, nor even one word about any *military strategy* employed. In fact the Torah narrative does not even reference any miscellaneous skirmish. There seems to have been no "battle". We are merely told:

Vayitzbei'u al-Midyan

They went forth unto Midyan

ka'asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe

as the Holy One had instructed Moshe,

vayahargu kol-zachar

and they killed all the males.

v'et-malchei Midyan ha-regu al-chaleleihem

Along with the other persons, they also killed the five kings of Midyan:

et-Evi v'et-Rekem v'et-Tzur v'et-Chur

Evi, and Rekem, and Tzur, and Chur,

v'et-Reva chameshet malchei Midyan

and Reva, the five Midianite kings.

v'et Bila'am ben-Be'or hargu b'charev

They also killed Bila'am son of Beor by the sword.

[Numbers 31:7-8]

Is this not a strange way for Torah to report a battle of 12,000 men against over an estimated 100,000-man army? It is as if the Midyanim were struck in a supernatural sleep - and were able to offer little if any resistance.

Vayishbu b'nei-Yisra'el et-neshei Midyan v'et-tapam

The Israelites took captive all the women of Midyan and their children.

v'et kol-behemtam v'et-kol-mikneihem

They took as booty all their animals, all their possessions,

v'et-kol-cheylam bazazu

and all their wealth.

V'et kol-areyhem b'mosh'votam v'et kol-tirotam sarefu ba'esh

All their residential cities and all their fortresses they set afire.

[Numbers 31:9-10]

The actual battle of ancient Israel's *Operation Naqam Niq'mat* was over just about as quickly as it began. The Holy One choreographed every move of Israel's 12,000 troops. Every warrior of Midyan was slain – with *not a single casualty on the part of Israel*. Amazing! A surgical strike was delivered with precision directly to the heart of the enemy. The hydra-head of Midyani terror was cut off.

Divine restraint was exercised. Not one blow was administered beyond that which

the Holy One specifically directed. There were no human heroes. There was no celebration of death. There was no arrogant gloating over the vanquished foe. Victory belonged to the Holy One alone – and only His glory mattered.

Not one Hebrew warrior fell on the field of battle. The Holy One was our King, our Captain, our Strategist, our Shield, our Armor, and the Lifter of our Head. As David would later report: *When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.* Psalm 27:2.

Victory is won. The Midyani great deception and terror machine is disabled for at least a generation. Our *young men, our Camp, our wives and little ones – they are all now safe from the hate-filled slander, malicious schemes, and vicious attacks of Midyan.* Now it is time to *give thanks to the Holy One.* But alas, it is not by any means the end of the story.

Hmmmmn - What About the Women and Children of Midyan?

As field commander of *Operation Naqam Niq'mat*, Pinchas oversaw all the battlefield activities. He faithfully fulfilled his charge. His work was done. Or was it? As the prototypical man of zeal surveyed the death and destruction of the great battlefield one last time he saw something transpire that shook him to the core of his Hebrew identity. Wandering around the battlefield, dodging corpses, frantically calling out the names of husbands and fathers who would never again be coming home, thousands of distraught Midyani women and children of all ages started to appear. They would search through the bodies of the fallen soldiers of Midyan until they came to one they recognized. Their hopes shattered, they would then fall to the ground in a heap as if struck from above by a great unseen sword. And soon the air would be filled – first with sobbing, then with wailing. Life as they had known it was no more.

Every single woman, as far as Pinechas could see, was now a widow. Every child he now saw – every newborn, every suckling infant, every toddler, all the way up to every pre-pubescent beauty and want-to-be warrior - was now fatherless. These had been non-combatants in the armed struggle that had played itself out in this field – and yet they were now condemned to suffer far more than had the vanquished. Individually and collectively these were now hapless refugees of war. Alas, such is the unfortunate immediate aftermath of every battle ever fought – including every holy war. This time it was Pinechas' turn to have his ears suddenly overwhelmed by the sounds of calamity. The atmosphere around the battlefield reverberated with cries of despair, with groans of mourning, with shouts of anger and outrage, and with pitiful screams for retribution and revenge. There was no escaping the horrible shrieking.

The war was over. The battle was won. But the women and children of Midyan remained. Making war, it turns out, is one thing. Dealing with the bloody aftermath of war in real time is quite another. If Pinchas and his 12,000-man strike force just turned around and marched back to the Camp of the Redeemed, these newly widowed and orphaned sons and daughters of Midyan would either die a horrible death or be forced into slavery by the other residents of the area - the Moavi, the Edomi, the Amaleki, the warriors of Arad, and the Kena'ani. Nothing but cruelty, exploitation, and abuse awaited them if he just turned away and left them in their grief. So what was Pinechas to do in response to their cries and screams? What would the Holy One want him to do? What would *you* do, Dear Reader?

Pinchas Has a Moment of Clarity

Remember that Pinechas came to our attention as the one man among all the Redeemed Community who actually *felt the very emotions of the Holy One*. These women are not Kozbi and Zimri, blaspheming the Holy One by consorting shamelessly in the Courts of the *Mish'kan* over which he was given responsibility. These are just women and children – human beings in the midst of intense suffering and sorrow. For Pinechas, therefore, the choice is clear. He cannot just leave these defenseless women and children to suffer the cruelty, the lust, and brutality of the animal-like peoples of the desert. He has seen on many occasions what kind of spirit controlled the men who traveled this part of the world. And so Pinechas had his men gather up all the women, the children, the livestock, as well as all the worldly goods left behind by the Midyani warriors who had fallen in battle. He had them all brought back to the Camp of the Redeemed to allow the Holy One – or at least the council of the elders – to decide what should ultimately be done for and with them.

As the young zealot and his band of warriors approached the Camp with the Midyani women, children, and goods in tow, Pinechas' uncle Moshe, his father Elazar, and a delegation of leaders from the various tribes of Israel came out to meet them. Pinechas presented to all the leaders of the Redeemed Community both the report of the great victory the Holy One had wrought and all the human and material spoil they had taken from Midyan. All the news seemed good. Each and every soldier sent forth by Israel had returned with Pinechas safe and sound. Elazar has his beloved son back in his arms. Every clan and every tribe of Israel was about to be restored to wholeness. This should have been cause for great rejoicing. But all eyes fell upon Moshe.

We have seen what Pinechas would do with the women and children of Midyan. We have seen what he thought the Holy One would do concerning them. But we

had yet to see what *Moshe's reaction* would be. One might have thought Moshe would have stopped, lifted his eyes toward Heaven, and given thanks to the Holy One for the great victory. One might have hoped Moshe would have gone to the Tent of Meeting to seek counsel from the Holy One as to what should be done with the widows, children, and treasure of Midyan. But neither of those things is what happened. Instead, Moshe's reaction was much more like that we saw when he watched an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew slave, or when he returned to the camp at Sinai to see B'nei Yisrael cavorting with the image of a golden calf, or when he screamed 'you rebels' and violently struck the Rock at Merivah. In short, what happened when Pinechas and the warriors of Israel returned to the Camp with the spoil of Midyan was that Moshe had yet another 'moment'. Oh Moshe – after all these years, you have not learned: *the wrath of man cannot produce the righteousness of God*. James 1:20.

Moshe Has Yet One More Very Public 'Fallen Human Moment'

When the 12,000-man special force of Hebrews under Pinechas returned to camp with its amazing news – and the refugees of Midyan - Moshe was far from pleased. Here is how Torah records the aging prophet's reaction when our 'special forces' team returned to camp with Midyani captives and spoil in tow. It starts with *Vayiktzof Moshe* – then Moshe became *enraged*. He surrendered his *shalom* – and any semblance of wisdom - for a penny's worth of 'righteous indignation'. He totally *'lost it'*. He threw a tantrum. He had a fit. He embraced – and surrendered his mind, his heart, and his faculties of speech to the dark energy of outrage. He started his rant as follows.

Vayomer aleihem Moshe ha-chiyitem kol-nekevah

Why have you kept all the women alive?' demanded Moshe.

Hen henah hayu liv'nei Yisra'el bid'var Bila'am

These are the ones who were involved with Israel at Bila'am's instigation,

limsor-ma'al b'Adonai al-dvar Pe'or

causing them to be unfaithful to the Holy One in the Peor incident,

vatehi ha-magefah ba'adat Adonai

and bringing a plague on the Holy One's covenant community.

[Numbers 31:14]

Be careful now, Moshe. We have seen your rage at work before. Back in Egypt you slew the taskmaster in this kind of rage. Back at Sinai you broke the first set of tablets – and set in motion a holocaust – in this kind of rage. Back at Meribah you struck the rock and claimed for yourself the power to provide streams of living water in the desert in this kind of rage. Your becoming enraged has never turned out well - for you or for us. Oh great prophet, and friend of the Holy One - have you learned to *be angry, and sin not?* Have we? Will we ever?

Ah, Dear Reader, some women are made widows by swords of war; others have their homes destroyed and their lives shortened by tirades of anger and judgment. And some children are rendered fatherless by exploding missiles; others by careless words spoken by people who are called and commissioned to bless, not to curse.

All the instructions of the Holy One regarding the battle with Midyan [see **Numbers 25:17-18 and 31:1-4**] have thus far been followed to a tee. The triumphant return of the 12,000-man special Israeli force under the direction of Pinchas to camp testified of a great victory wrought by the Holy One to vindicate His Name. All the men of Midyan were dead. The only remnants of the once great nation of Midyan were *women and children*. But when Moshe saw the women and the children of Midyan, he barked out an instruction that should send a shiver down all of our spines to this day. His instruction – which the text clearly does *not* say was prompted by a ‘***Vayadaber Adonai el-Moshe, emor***’ [i.e. *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...*] preface, was:

V'atah hirgu chol-zachar bataf [Kill every male child!]
[Numbers 31:17(a)]

Wow! The last time someone gave an order to kill all the male children of an entire race of people was ... well, it was *back in Egypt*. And if memory serves me correctly the man who gave this particular order of male-child holocaust – our own dear prophet Moshe – just happened to have, long ago, been one of the male children to whom the last decree of man-child genocide was applicable. How is it possible that Moshe - once a victim of such a decree – would issue one every bit as deadly?

Did the Holy One really direct such a massacre? If so, why does the text of Torah not inform us of it? Why is there no ‘***Vayadaber Adonai el-Moshe, emor***’ [i.e. *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...*] preface? But wait – Moshe is still not through. He follows up the order to put every one of Midyan’s male children to the sword with the following equally stunning directive:

V'chol-ishah yoda'at ish l'mish'kav zachar harogu
Do the same to every woman who has been involved intimately with a man!
[Numbers 31:17(b)]

Is Moshe really telling us to slaughter women and children? Is not this the way of our enemies? Is not this the way of the Midyani? Is this not the counsel of the ungodly? What are we to make of the things Moshe told us to do with the Midyani women and their sons? How are we to incorporate it into our national consciousness? Talk about ‘*collateral damage*’! This is stunning indeed!

Are Seeds of Holocaust Being Sown Here?

Moshe was our ancestors' duly appointed leader. Will they do what he commands? Will they *follow a man's orders, and commit a holocaust*? If so, what will be the result? Will doing the frightening things Moshe instructs us to do to women and children tip the delicate scale of Divine Justice against us? Will the extra deathblows we are being told by Moshe to strike even after the Holy One concluded His recompense on Midyan while the battle on the field of combat wind up rebounding upon our own heads? Will we, or our children, or our children's children, one day reap exactly what we have sown this day? Only time – the narratives of Judges 6, the prophetic poetry of Psalm 83, and the chronicles of history – will tell.

The Question We Owe It To Ourselves to Ask – But Only in Reverence and Humility

Dare we ask ourselves the obvious question: Were the instructions that issued from the lips of Moshe in anger that day – i.e. his instructions to put all Midyan's male children, widows, and post-pubescent daughters to the sword – given at *the Holy One's direction*? The Holy One had supernaturally enabled the specially selected 12,000 man Israeli force to totally wipe out a vastly superior army. Was it really *the Holy One's will* that all the Midyani women and male children be slain as well? Or was the wholesale slaughter of the women and male children of Midyan just something Moshe in his own mind felt was necessary to make sure the 'sin of Ba'al Peor' never happened again? Did the Holy One truly say that our men, after prevailing in battle, were to commit such atrocities in cold blood? Or was this just more of Moshe's infamous fleshly Levitical anger talking? Did he see in these women and children the faces of Shechem, the Egyptian taskmaster, drunken fools dancing around a golden calf, rebellious opportunists like Korach, and the bloodthirsty raiders of Amalek, Arad, Sichon, and Og? Or was this harsh and distasteful decree something *Moshe came up with out of his own heart and mind* – drastic steps he deemed necessary once, and once only, for practical reasons of *expediency*? Are the curse-of-death instructions Moshe gave at this time in history to be considered and taught to our children as a part of *the perfect Torah of the Holy One* – or are they instead to be considered and taught to our children as merely the product of human emotion and pseudo-intellect?

Dear Reader, if you are ever put in a position where you are the one holding the sword, and women and children's lives are in your hand – well, please, please listen for instructions from the Bridegroom-King Himself, instead of orders from the mouth of any man. And please be very humble and sensitive to the Holy Spirit in relation to how you teach this passage to your children.

You see, Beloved, unlike the ancient religious books followed by adherents of man-made religions - especially Islam - the Torah does not look with favor on the massacre of human beings on the basis of nationality or tribal identity. Amalek we are to always be on the watch for, of course – and we are to resist their constant attempts to destroy us. The Kena’ani we are to attack only when they are squatting unlawfully within the boundaries of the land the Holy One has given to us. Even then, we are to first offer them the opportunity to relocate outside our land; if they agree to relocate, we are not to pursue or attack them. We are nowhere in Torah called or instructed by the Holy One to be either racists or murderers.

Always Look For the ‘Vayadaber Adonai ... L’Emor!’

As mentioned above, one can look in vain in the passage under consideration for the now-familiar ‘cue’ for people who are learning to *sh’ma* the Holy One’s words – i.e. *Vayadaber Adonai el-Moshe l’emor* [And the Holy One spoke unto Moshe, and said ...]. We must therefore ask ourselves – *Did the Holy One really say that all the male children of Midyan – not to mention all sexually active women - had to be executed? Was the post-battle execution of Midyani women and children something that Moshe directed in obedience to the Holy One’s specific command – or did Moshe ‘do it his way’?*

The purpose of asking these questions is not, in any regard, to ‘disrespect’ or ‘judge’ Moshe. Moshe is *the most humble man that ever lived*. **Numbers 12:3**. He is the chosen prophet of the Holy One. **Exodus 3:10**. He is the faithful shepherd and teacher of the Holy One’s covenant people. He is the man who is described in Scripture as *‘faithful in all of the Holy One’s house’*. **Numbers 12:7; Hebrews 3:2, 5**. Moshe is therefore the Holy One’s to judge, and the Holy One’s alone. But the questions are still legitimate. They are, you see, not really about Moshe. What he has done is done. The questions are legitimate because they are really about *you and me*, Dear Reader. The questions are legitimate because in every generation, in every circumstance, we will sometimes be tempted to – or think we have reason to - behave cruelly.

In such situations, as the Holy One’s ambassadors on earth we absolutely must be constantly aware of the vast difference between the *directions of the Holy One* on the one hand, and *the thoughts and intents of our own hearts and minds*, on the other hand. We must follow the former without wavering - whatever other men, or indeed our own consciences, say. And we must at all costs abhor the latter, no matter how many voices – or what leaders of our people - echo the same sentiments or expound the same arguments. The lifestyle to which we are called, as the Holy One’s chosen people, and as the *‘light to the nations’*, you see, is not to

either follow our leaders or follow our hearts. We are not to act according to our own reason, to behave ‘morally and ethically’ as other people define those terms, or even to do ‘*what we think is right*’ in a given situation. We are never to seek to justify or defend unjust behavior on the grounds that we were ‘just following orders’. What we are called to do is to *sh’ma* the words of the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven.

Blessed Is He Who Is Not Offended

Sometimes – indeed most times - the Holy One’s decrees and judgments will seem far too *lenient* for our tastes. He loves to forgive. We, like Yonah [Jonah], will often be offended by His longsuffering and mercy toward our enemies. Other times, His decrees and judgments will strike us as far too *harsh*. Like Shaul, we will insist on finding a reason to do what we want to do instead of what He says to do.

Our father Avraham knew this difficult aspect of walking with the Holy One very well. Go back and re-read passages like Genesis 18:20-32 [where Avraham tried to bargain with the Holy One over the imminent judgment of S’dom], and Genesis 21:8-13 [where Avraham became ‘greatly distressed’ at the decree banishing Yishma’el and Hagar from the covenant community] if you do not know what I mean. Moshe often experienced this internal struggle as well – see Exodus 32:9-14, and 33:12-15 if you want to get a sense of what I am talking about.

It is time we learned how to deal with this as well. When it comes down to it, you see, it is a question of trust. When tough decisions have to be made in your life, *in what standard do you put your trust, Dear Reader?* Do you, at such times, put your trust in your own – or your society’s - perception of what is ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ behavior? Do you put your trust in your own – or your leaders’ - sense of what is ‘right and wrong’? Do you put your trust in your own – or some other man or group of men’s - ability to judge what is ‘prudent’, ‘necessary’ and ‘expedient’ conduct in a given situation? Or are you able, in tough situations, to lay all those aside, to ignore all the other voices, and to *put your trust in the eternal words of the Holy One of Israel, and in those words alone* – no matter who it offends, and no matter what the cost? The latter is what it means to be an *ambassador of the Holy One* in this world.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Now for some basic questions about today’s aliyah:

[A] What “final assignment” does the Holy One give Moshe?

[B] Read Exodus 2:11 - 3:1. With what people had Moshe lived for forty years after Egypt for the first time?

[C] Imagine you are Moshe and have received this last command. Write an

entry in your [Moshe's] diary expressing how you feel about this last command.

2. The prophetic war Torah describes as being waged against Midyan was truly a supernatural war.

- [A] What does Torah say was the purpose of this war?
- [B] How many Israelites participated in this war?
- [C] How were the participating Israelites selected?
- [D] Which priest was sent with the Israelites, and why?
- [E] Who besides Midyanites was killed by the Israelites?

3. When the men selected for this campaign returned to the camp in the plains of Moab, Moshe was angry.

- [A] Why was Moshe angry?
- [B] What did the combatants have to do to be cleansed after the bloodshed?
- [C] What 3 groups shared in the spoil of the battle along with the soldiers?

4. In today's Haftarah reading Yirmayahu speaks of Israel as the Holy One's "bride", and chastises her for breaking her "vow".

*The word of the Holy One came to me, saying,
Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, the Holy One says:
I remember for you the kindness of your youth,
the love shared on the day you were betrothed to Me;
how you accompanied me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.
Yisra'el - you were sanctified unto the Holy One, the first fruits of My increase:
all who devour you shall be held guilty; evil shall come on them, says the Holy One.*

- [A] When, where, and how did the Holy One marry Israel?
- [B] What vows did Israel make to the Holy One?
- [C] How had Israel broken those vows in Yirmayahu's time?

5. Also in today's haftarah reading Yirmayahu points out that at some point the leaders of Israel quit asking a certain critical question.

*Neither said they:
ayeh Adonai ha-ma'aleh otanu me'erezt Mitzrayim
"Where is the Holy One who brought us up out of the land of Mitzrayim,
ha-molich otanu bamidbar
who led us through the wilderness,
b'erezt aravah v'shuchah
through a land of deserts and of pits,
b'erezt tziyah v'tzalmavet
through a land of drought and of the shadow of death,
b'erezt lo-avar bah ish v'lo-yashav adam sham*

through a land that none passed through, and where no man lived?"

[Jeremiah 2:6]

[A] What question did the leaders of Israel cease to ask?

[B] Have you asked that question this week with regard to your life? Pray, then answer the question in your own words.

6. In today's reading from the writings of the talmidim of Yeshua *Shaul of Tarsus* [Paul] speaks of a certain "mindset" which should be shared by all who are "perfect" [KJV] or "mature" [NIV].

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, think this way.

If in anything you think otherwise, the Holy One will also reveal that to you.

[Philippians 3:15]

[A] What mindset is he talking about? Describe it in your own terms [you will have to go back to Philippians 3:1-14 to obtain an understanding of this mindset].

[B] Look up the word "perfect", as used in this verse [KJV], in Strong's. Write the Greek word and its definition.

[C] What Hebrew word do you think the Greek word mentioned above was used to translate? [**Hint:** look up "perfect" in an expository dictionary like Richard's or Vine's; then look at this verse in Goble's Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha and try to find the word he translates instead of "perfect" in Strong's index of Hebrew words.]

[D] How does one acquire the mindset Shaul is speaking about? Explain.

*May the Name of the Holy One and Messiah be vindicated,
in Israel and in all the world, in our lifetime.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 94:1-5,16-23

O HOLY ONE, You, God, to whom naqam belongs,

You, God, to whom naqam belongs, shine forth.

Rise up, you judge of the eretz. Pay back the proud what they deserve.

O HOLY ONE, how long will the wicked ... How long will the wicked triumph?

They pour out arrogant words. All the evildoers boast.

They break your people in pieces, O HOLY ONE, and afflict your heritage

Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand up for me against the evildoers?

Unless the Holy One had been my help my soul would have soon lived in silence.

When I said, "My foot is slipping!" Your lovingkindness, O HOLY ONE, held me up.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul.

Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with you,

that brings about mischief by statute?

They gather themselves together

*against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.
But the Holy One has been my high tower - My God, the rock of my refuge.
He has brought on them their own iniquity,
and He will cut them off in their own wickedness.
The Holy One, our God, will cut them off.*