

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Massei:*** **Numbers 35:9 – 36:13**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 3:4; 4:1-2**
 B'rit Chadasha: **James 4:6-12**

Bloodshed pollutes the land.

[Numbers 35:33]

Today's Meditation is Job 35:5-11;

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

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...
.Daber el-B'nei Yisra'el v'amarta aleheim – Speak to B'nei Yisrael, and say to them ... **ki**
atem ovrin et-ha-Yarden artzah Kena'an – When you cross over the Jordan and enter
the land of Kana'an Numbers 35:9-10a.

Sefer B'midbar has taken us on quite a ride. We have followed the Pillar of Fire and Cloud all the way from the flaming Mountain of the Holy One to the sprawling Moavian Plateau, overlooking Jericho. Traversing watershed after watershed and wadi after wadi, we have gradually made the transition from the monastic shadows of Sinaitic seclusion into the bustling arena populated by nations that rage and ethnicities that obsess over vanities. Some of the adventures we have experienced along the way have been exhilarating; some have been excruciating; but looking back now, they all seem eerily prophetic of the coming season the world speaks of as the 'end of days'. Nevertheless, considering the kindnesses we have been shown from Heaven and the powerful lessons we have learned about life along the way, there is no way we change a thing.

The Avrahamic Covenant Holds Firm – and Guides Us All the Way

When a person walks in Covenant with his Creator, every season, every situation – indeed absolutely every *moment* – of life on earth is infused with opportunities for learning and growth. Different seasons and different environs tend to yield different lessons, of course – but all are a part of the Great Divine Curriculum of Kingdom Coursework that we call the 'Torah Journey'. Each set of coordinates through which we pass in this life comes pre-programmed with its own unique matrix of educational and redemptive purposes. And as we study and meditate upon Torah, year after year, season by season, parsha by parsha, we are called to apply the wisdom of the Holy One's instruction manual in real time, to real people, places, and situations, in the midst of real weather patterns, and real interpersonal

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and inter-cultural challenges. As we do this, we grow not only in *grace*, but also in *the intimate knowledge of our God*, His Ways, and His Grand Plan for both the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation to Edenic state.

The Testimony of our Patriarchs

During our season of walking with the patriarchs we learned that the Holy One is wise, and we are not; that He is good, and we are not; and that He can be trusted – and that our own intelligence, data base of knowledge, belief system, perspective on life, people, situations and possibilities, and our emotions cannot be. So, equipped with this understanding - at least in its initial stages – our Covenant Partner arranged things so that we, as had Avraham, would spend a little time in Egypt. Once in the land of the pyramids, however, we quickly got distracted, and forgot – or at least pushed to the far recesses of our mind – just about everything we had learned from walking with the patriarchs in the sacred land. Despite the example Yosef set for us, we descended into and began to absorb the darkness of the Egyptian culture. We began to think vanity, believe nonsense, opine folly, and speak curses the way the pagans around us did. Within a generation, we were reacting to situations, indulging appetites, engaging in behavior patterns, overvaluing material things, and undervaluing human life the way they did as well. And so it happened that our sojourn in the land of pharaohs and pyramids got more and more unpleasant, and taught us firsthand, in painful ways, the *banality*, the *cruelty*, the *greed*, the *superstitious folly*, the *paranoia*, and the *perversion of uncleanness* that attaches itself to, takes control over, thinks and speaks for, and ultimately destroys even the best and brightest men who try to live outside the Plan and contrary to the Ways of the Creator. We learned that people who allow themselves to think, emote, opine, speak, react, and behave according to what serpentine figure hawking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil tells them *always* turn on us, blame us for their own failures, and plot to destroy us. We recognized that there had to be a better way, and that the ‘better way’ is require walking *with our All-Wise Creator* instead of *walking with the world* as it freewheels and freefalls through space. This introduced us to the fear of/reverence for the Holy One – and it became for us the beginning point of wisdom. At this point the Holy One instituted phase II of His Grand Plan - He delivered us from bondage to the Egyptians and their ways – and brought us to Mount Sinai.

Fond Remembrances of Our Time At Sinai

At Sinai we caught a glimpse of *the beauty and majesty the Holy One envisions us modeling to the world* to offer it a more excellent way to do just about everything. We caught the vision. We enthusiastically jumped into the Greatest Project ever known to man. At the Holy One’s instruction, we turned the Tower of Babel concept on its head. Instead of proudly building a tower of our own design that reached into the heavenlies the way they did, we humbly built a portal of the Holy

One's design and invited the King Heaven to come to and communicate His beauty, majesty, goodness, and holiness to earth. He indeed came – in Manifest Glory. He swept us off of our feet. Oh, His BEAUTY! Oh, His MAJESTY! Oh, His WORDS! Oh, His WISDOM! Oh, His LOVE! Oh His WONDERFUL PLANS FOR MANKIND AND CREATION! We delighted to sit in His Shade. We became invigorated by breathing in and holding His fragrance. We began to tune our ears and our spirits to the sound of His Voice – and eventually to the rhythm of His Breathing. We clamored to inhale whatever He exhaled. We started to absorb – and even to pulse with - His energy. We began to thrive under His inspiration. The longer we sat in His Presence, *sh'ma*-ing His Voice, meditating upon His Wonderful Words, the more we took on His passion for life, His love for people, and His delight in Creation. We even embraced the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover. We started to actually look like the *am segulah*, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, and the *dark yet beautiful, humble yet noble, wise yet gentle Bride-people* that He told us He promised to work with us to become. As long as we were basking daily in His Presence, that is.

The Hard Lessons of the Wilderness

But then the *Ruach* led us into the wilderness, and that is when things started to go sideways. In our King's Presence we had known fullness of joy – but in *the wilderness*? In the wilderness we did not lose His Presence, which is always with us – but what we did lose was *the sensation and realization of His Presence*. Oh how quickly our vision, passion, energy, and clarity began to fade! Layer by layer, stronghold by stronghold, the wilderness began to expose the ugliness and vanity that lurked in our un-surrendered flesh, just waiting for the right excuse to erupt like Vesuvius. As we re-entered the earth's atmosphere from the Sinaitic portal of ingress to and egress from the Heavenly realms of our King, we began to feel, once again, the familiar obsessive/compulsive twinges of ego/self-pity; pleasure-seeking/pain-avoidance; attraction/revulsion; fight/flight; curiosity/fear; and irritation/offense/outrage. We began to exchange the precious things of our King's Beauty Realm for the putrid garbage of the Fallen Realm. We began to indulge vain imaginations instead of meditating on the Wisdom of Torah. We began to embrace unclean passions instead of zeal for the holy things of the Tabernacle. We began to think, talk, and behave like the lustful, greedy, gluttonous, slothful, prideful, envious, and jealous people of cultures who know not the Creator. Following the broad way approach of the nations instead of the narrow way mode of Torah, we cast off restraints. We forsook all the self-denial and self-discipline protocols the Holy One had taught us at Sinai. We opted for the way of folly instead of the way of wisdom; for the fragmentation of *tumah*² instead of the

² *Tumah* is a Hebrew noun that English speaking theologians often translate incorrectly as 'uncleanness', or 'ritual impurity'. *Tumah* is merely a state of fragmentation/conflict of interest

wholeness of *tahorah*³, and for the corruption of that which is *chol*⁴ instead of the energy of that which is *kadosh*⁵. We allowed the dark energy of fleshly curiosity, sensuality, sentimentality, pseudo-intellect, and superstition displace the fear of the Holy One in us. We had to experience first-hand how the things of the flesh, if allowed to operate in us, will choke the life right out of a person; will poison marriage and family harmony; will bring jealousy and envy between our clans; will demoralize and weaken our tribes; will sabotage our national calling; will steal our identity as redeemed sons and daughters of the Great King from us; and will prevent us from accomplishing our redemptive assignment on earth.

The desert absolutely ate our lunch. The heat; the exertion; the rough terrain; the dust storms that seemed to appear out of nowhere, with no warning; the excruciatingly long days – and even longer nights; the constant circling of vultures; the pain and itching that comes with sand flea bites; the sense of homelessness that comes with frequent travel; the physical and mental challenges of isolation from the comforts and conveniences of ‘civilization’; the chaffing of the skin; the lack of sanitation; the suddenly irritating sound of every human voice except – and sometimes including – our own; all these environmental factors brought out things in us that we thought we had left behind in the slime pits of Egypt. We let the negative energy of the flesh’s thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and appetites drain us of first our passion for the Holy One’s Presence, Wisdom, Will, Words, and Ways; then our goodwill toward all men; then our *shalom*; then our joy; then our patience; then our humility and meekness; then our gentleness and goodness; and finally all our self-control. As He knew we would, we began to let complaint, accusation, cursing, and judging come flowing in torrents out of the very mouths that we had learned at Sinai were meant only for thanksgiving, encouraging exhortation, blessing, and offering wise, practical counsel for restoration and reconciliation. No matter how many times or in how many ways He called us back to His side to be healed and restored to Covenant relationship and focus, we just couldn’t – or wouldn’t – *sh’ma*. So He gave us over to a reprobate mind and to

of the human mind, will, and emotions resulting from some encounter or experience that engendered a flesh-reaction.

³ *Tahorah* is a Hebrew noun that English speaking theologians often translate incorrectly as ‘cleanness’ or ‘ritual purity’. *Tahorah* is merely a state of wellness/healing of the human mind, will, and emotions resulting from *sh’ma*-ing the directives of the Holy One.

⁴ *Chol* is a Hebrew adjective that English speaking theologians often translate incorrectly as ‘common’ or ‘profane’. *Chol* simply means *carrying/exuding the dark energy of the flesh and/or pseudo-intellect of fallen man*.

⁵ *Kadosh* is a Hebrew adjective that English speaking theologians often translate incorrectly (or at least incompletely) as ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’. *Kadosh* means *carrying/exuding the transformative, healing, inspiring energy of the Creator’s Manifest Presence, Wisdom, and Goodness*.

uncleanness. Most of us surrendered wholeheartedly to the flesh's 'resistance movement'. We actually began to find ourselves enjoying anger – and buying the serpent's lie that our irritability was discernment, that our revulsion reflex was righteous indignation in operation, and that our outrage was just, pure, and productive. We therefore began to believe the absurdity that complaining, protesting, accusing, and judging the conduct and motivations of others was '*standing up for what is right*'. We embraced sarcasm, cynicism, sentimentality, sensuality, offense, envy, complaint, accusation, blame-casting, label-attribution, slogan-appropriation, irreverence, incitement, profanity, sexual indulgences, superstitions, cultish spiritualism, and idolatry as if these childish behaviors were the ultimate forms of self-expression and evidence of true virtue.

The Holy One knew that we would do these things in the wilderness. That was His plan. He had to show us the horror of human folly in the most up-close and personal way imaginable before He could trust us to be Passionate, Faithful, and Credible Witnesses of the vast superiority of His More Excellent Way. He knew that before we can overcome what we are called to overcome, and accomplish what we are called to accomplish, we absolutely have to learn the hard way what not to do, and how not to react or respond to distractions, to temptations, to seductions, to appetites, to challenges, to injustices, to immoralities, and to every other form of negative energy we will encounter in the world. If we are going to shine as lights in the darkness – and that is our calling - we must know how heavy and oppressive the darkness is, and why the people and places trapped in darkness so desperately need, yet so passionately resist, the healing energy of light.

The wilderness, you see, is where the Ruach leads all sons and daughters of the Covenant to teach us how to live out *the high calling of our King* in real ways, in a real world, in real time. The Holy One designs wilderness journeys to bring us to the point of practical fruit-bearing. He knows we cannot fulfill our purpose sequestered on a mountaintop, basking in an uninterrupted flow of revelation, isolated from the very people and places we are called to infuse with beauty. So, He caused us to face a barrage of seemingly impossible challenges in the wilderness. The wilderness served as our *boot camp*, our *obstacle course*, and our *tactical training ground*. The Holy One knows that we will never find out what we are made of – and where we still desperately need to grow and mature - until every fiber of our being is challenged. He knows that we will not understand the importance of mission-focus, communication protocol, and command coordination until we experience firsthand the difficulty, distraction, disconnection, disorientation, disinformation, and resulting disaster of trying to do things our way, trusting our own instincts, leaning on our understanding, the way our rebellious flesh keeps telling us to do.

It is in the desert seasons that we begin to learn the extent to recognizing the high calling of Heaven upon our lives tends to make us less and less focused on things like *comfort, sensual pleasure, and social status*, and more and more focuses on things like *relationship with our Bridegroom-King* and fulfilling our *mission as His Chosen Bride-to-be*. In the desert seasons we suffer many crises of composure, of confidence, and of commitment. But through these experiences we begin to get a feel for the dramatic practical effect that the high calling of the Holy One is designed to have upon things like *the way we think of ourselves and our purpose in life; like the way we reckon and utilize time; like the way we deal with material possessions; like the way we maintain mission-focus in the face of distractions; like the way we resist the temptation to employ our faculties of thought, emotion, and speech in the service of the enemy; like the way we relate to our family members and countrymen; and like how and subject to what priorities and principles we interact with the peoples and nations of the world*.

It is in the desert seasons that we begin to learn that the highest goal for those who share this high calling of Heaven is not to *increase our knowledge, or to build our reputation, or to expand our influence or territory, or to become 'the best that we can be' personally, or to win theological arguments*, but is instead to lay all those lesser goals down for the supreme privilege of *bringing honor and glory and dominion – as well as delight - to the King into whose service we have been called*.

Discovering and Learning to Walk Honorably In Our Glorious Calling

In the Wilderness we have been face, overcome, and transcend the greatest challenges this world has to offer. We learned how easy it is to touch with our true identity as sons and daughters of Avraham – and how easily we can get distracted from or discouraged in our ‘blessing to every family on the face of the earth’ mission, and our ‘kingdom-of-priests and holy nation destiny. We have discovered that the Bridegroom-King Who has called us is *merciful, and compassionate, slow to anger, kind, and ever faithful to His Covenant*. Having been forgiven much we have learned to love much. We have discovered that knowing the Holy One is a delight, that walking with Him is the greatest and most fulfilling adventure possible in life, and that serving Him is a supreme pleasure. We are coming to realize what an awesome honor – and yet what a daunting responsibility - it is to be ‘*His People*’, and for Him to be *our God, Who brought us up from the land of bondage*’. We have just begun to discover what it means to be *His Special Treasure People, His Kingdom’s Royal Ambassadors, and His holy nation*. We are just scratching the surface of what it means, in real time, to recognize the petty urges, appetites, frustrations, offenses, arguments, and concerns of self-obsessed

human flesh for what they are, to rise above them, and to walk in a way that mirrors His Wisdom, His Compassion, and His Holiness. We are learning that our Bridegroom-King's calling of *kedusha* is *an identity calling* - a calling that impacts *of our lives from birth to marriage to sexuality to the generation of income to death*. We are learning to expand the commitment to *be holy as He is holy* to every area of our lives – from what we do and do not allow ourselves to look at and listen to, to the way we spend our time, energy, passion, and money; to the way we use our imagination and capacity for logic and reasoning to the way we employ our creativity; from the way we pray and worship to the way we train up our children; from the way we think about and behave in relation to ‘neighbors’ and the ‘foreigner’ to what we do and do not consider ‘food’; from what calendar we follow to the way we dress and wear our hair; from the way we speak to and about others to the way we react to the irritations, temptations, stresses, disappointments, and tragedies of life.

We are learning to establish and maintain *lovely tents* – brimming with kindness and *bayit shalom*. We are learning what it means to *dwell apart from among the other nations* of the earth - *and not be reckoned* among them - whatever form of seduction or intimidation they throw at us. We are learning to relish be people of whom it is said by those outside our circle *‘the Holy One His God is with him!’* and *‘The shout of a King is among them!’*

The wilderness testings we have undergone have all been about developing in us the characteristics of a *passionate Bride-to-be*. We are developing a deep longing to be with our Bridegroom-King – and to establish a pleasant palace for Him on earth. We are also learning what it means to be deployed, when necessary, as elite soldiers in an army whose purpose is to expand His realm of dominion. We are learning to walk in and live by a Kingdom-culture, and to think, speak and live in that culture generation-by-generation. We are being trained by our King to change the atmosphere in the world by modeling His Goodness and Wisdom, and releasing His sweet fragrance, every where He sends us.

The Staging Ground

And now, before we enter into *Eretz Yisrael* – the narrow land bridge between continents that has been chosen as the operations center for our King's Grand Plan of Redemption – the Holy One wants to speak to us concerning the Kingdom-culture government that He wants us to institute once we enter and possess the land. Where we find ourselves at this critical moment in time, you see, is merely a *staging ground for the greater destiny which is about to be unleashed*. For our ancestors the staging ground for the great prophetic launch was the plain of Moav opposite Jericho. For us today it is the homes in which we live, the marketplace in

which we work and shop, and the neighborhoods, villages, and countries in which we worship and study and dwell.

Not many days hence we will embark collectively on the penultimate stage of the mission to we have been called – *i.e.* actually *establishing an earthly portal for the release the reign of Heaven on earth.*

Behold: The Beachhead

Heaven is about to invade earth, you see. Our ancestors were about to retake the land of the patriarchs and promises, and they were about to do so not as a *gaggle of freed slaves* but as the *well-trained diplomatic corps of the Kingdom of Heaven*. The West Bank of the Jordan River is about to be established as the Great King's next strategic beachhead⁶. In preparation for taking us into that land the Holy One will announce both substantive and procedural laws regarding the taking of human life [*i.e.* committing murder and manslaughter] - and the avenging of blood – which He wants us to follow when we begin to exercise the awesome privilege of establishing our homes within that land's boundaries.

The focus of today's aliyah is on *a special quality of the land* we are about to possess about which we need to be fully aware before we enter it. The special quality of the land of the patriarchs we need to be cognizant of is that it is polluted by the shedding of innocent blood. Under the hand of the Kena'ani the glorious land of Avraham, Yitschak 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.*

Introducing Special Kinds of Cities – Administered by Levites!

Near the end of the aliyah we read yesterday the Holy One declared that one of the things we were to do when we enter into and take possession of Eretz Yisrael is to establish 48 specially designed 'Levitical Cities' to be spread throughout the country. These cities were to assure that when not serving in the Temple the Levi'im were dispersed throughout all the tribal allotments.

The Levitical cities called for by the Holy One were, of course, by no means exclusively for the descendants of Levi. The cities were normal cities in every way

⁶ A *beachhead* is a base of operations established by an invading military force at the strategic location its strategists chose to begin the invasion. The goal of the first wave of fighting units of an invading force is to establish a defensible position in the land being invaded from which to stage further operations. Sinai was the first beachhead. It formed the pattern. But Eretz Yisrael, and more specifically Jerusalem, and even more specifically Temple Mount, constitute the ultimate planned portal for the release of the Kingdom on the earth.

except that the Levi'im were provided a place to reside and conduct agriculture in them without having to pay rent. The idea seems to be that they were thus able to interact with the rest of B'nei Yisrael on a regular basis, teach the Torah, and constitute 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* [or 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.

Because Levitical cities were all walled cities they functioned as trade centers, centers of justice and education, and places to which the people would flee in times of foreign invasion.

Introducing Special Kinds of These Special Cities – Arei Miqlat – i.e. Cities of Refuge

The idea of cities of refuge was first raised by the Holy One back at Sinai, where as part of the *Mish'patim Discourse* of Torah the Divine Bridegroom told Moshe:

Makeh ish vamet mot yumat

If one person is struck by another and dies - death causes death.

V'asher lo tzadah

If he did not lie in wait for him [or lay waste to him]

v'ha-elohim inah l'yado

and the judges/authorities approach for his hand

v'samti lecha makom asher yanus shamah

I will provide a place where he may flee.

[Exodus 21:12-13]

Note the concluding phrase – ***makom asher yanus shamah***, i.e. a place where he may flee. Hmmmm. If a person must flee, that must mean someone is after him. What to do, where to go?

My Shield and the Horn of my Salvation, My Stronghold and my Refuge⁷

In this world *stuff happens*. Some of it is really bad. How we react when stuff happens – and how we treat people who are in the middle of the stuff that happens - is supposed to be one of the major things that distinguishes real servants of the Most High from the other people of the world. When stuff happens the Holy One does not call His People to be critics, accusers, or blame-placers. He does not call His People to go around judging the human beings – or nations or ethnic groups -

⁷ II Samuel 22:3, from the Song of David.

involved in the ‘stuff’. He does not call His People to be activists or protesters or vigilantes or crusaders for ‘*truth, justice, and the American [or European, or Asian, or African, or Jewish] Way*’. He calls His People to provide *refuge – a place where the one in trouble may flee*. Let’s talk about that novel idea a little, shall we? The Hebrew phrase our English Bibles translate as ‘refuge’ in the text of our Torah reading for today is *miqlat*⁸. This is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *qalat* [*qof, lamed, tav*], which means to contract/draw closer together, as in to *huddle* or *draw into an enclosure*. Picture what happens in Israel today when the missile sirens go off, and people have to stop whatever they are doing and run for the nearest appointed shelter, and you get a pretty good picture of what this Hebrew verb depicts. Turning this verb into a noun by adding the *mem* as a prefix, changes the focus from the action of contracting/drawing closer as the sirens sound to *the place to which the people run*. A *miqlat*, then, is *a secure enclosure into which people run for shelter in times of trouble*. It is a place of protection, where a person or family can huddle with others in safety until a danger passes.

The Issue Is the Pollution of the Land By the Spilling On It of Innocent Blood

Before Kayin went out to lay in wait in a field for his brother *Hevel* [Genesis 4:8] the Holy One spoke to Kayin, to warn him against letting his offense take control of his soul. After Kayin disregarded the warning and committed the worst deed possible the Holy One visited Kayin again. This time the Holy One said:

What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from under the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.

Kayin complained that his penalty was too severe - that “whoever” found him would kill him. Who would find him? Seth was not yet born. The only people on the earth were Adam and *Chava* [Eve] and Kayin himself. The only people who could possibly “find” him and kill him would be Adam or Chava, his mother and father - the next of kin of Hevel, who was slain. Kayin recognized that his own father and/or mother - or eventually someone else born from their union - would be the ones to avenge [Hebrew *goel*, which means to redeem, to vindicate, or to avenge] the death of Hevel. This was “too much” for Kayin to bear. So in an act foreshadowing His unfathomable grace toward human beings the Holy One continued to reach out to Kayin, giving him a “mark” to clearly warn anyone who wanted to kill him that judgment would be upon them and would be severe. But He did lift the curse on Kayin’s *relationship with the land*. It was the Holy One’s will that a *Goel* [the Redeemer/Vindicator/Avenger, Messiah Yeshua] must come forth in the fullness of time to redeem the land, by spilling acceptable blood (i.e. blood which would be accepted by

⁸ *Miqlat* is spelled *mem, quf, lamed, tet*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4733, it is pronounced *mik-lawt’*,

the Holy One as a substitute for the blood of all murderers).

Likewise, as the Holy One now prepares the Redeemed Remnant to enter the Land of Israel He warns them that the shedding of innocent blood will pollute the land, and will cause it to “cry out” for redemption, vindication, and avenging. This cry will stir the heart of the next-of-kin of the victim. The Holy One however wished for His People to be different from other peoples - for them to create cities of refuge⁹ to which one who innocently (in his own eyes, at least) killed another could run, to escape the *goel*. This did not mean the killer would go free. A Torah-consistent trial would be held, and afterwards consequences - possibly even execution, for certain types of killings - would ensue. But the possibility of [a] vindication, and [b] grace were always to on the table. That is the Holy One’s way. Blessed be His Name.

The Carrying Forth of the Biblical Thread

After the Flood the Holy One told Noach and his sons: ***He who spills human blood, by man his blood is to be spilled, for in the image of God was man made.*** **Genesis 9:6.** Generations later, at Sinai, the Holy One’s Voice affirmed this aspect of the covenant He had made with Noach and his sons, thundering from Heaven the following unmistakable message: ***Lo tirtzach*** – *i.e. You will not/are not violently break into pieces.* **Exodus 20:13.**

The Hebrew verb that is the subject of the latter instruction is *ratzach*¹⁰. It means to *violently break into pieces*. The most commonly understood form of doing this involves *bringing about a death by violent assault*. But it really means simply the shedding of innocent blood. It can be literal, in the sense of causing a physical wound from which blood issues forth¹¹, or as Yeshua taught in the Sermon on the Mount¹² it can be symbolic, in the sense of causing an emotional scar with angry looks, words, labels, and accusations.

Though the Holy One condemns the shedding of human blood in the harshest terms, He still has love for the person who shed the blood, and therefore demands that such person not be executed without having the opportunity to receive a fair trial. The accused person was to be protected until he could be tried fairly and objectively by the society. One very strong evidence of this is the Holy One’s provision, in the very Torah which establishes the death penalty as the proper

⁵ For further information on the refuge/city of refuge concept see Exodus 21:12-13, Deuteronomy 19:1-13, and Joshua 20:1-9.

¹⁰ *Ratzach* is spelled *resh, tzade, chet*. Strong’s Hebrew word #7523, it is pronounced *raw-tzawkh*’.

¹¹ A Biblical picture of the kind of conduct that constitutes literal *ratzach* is found in Judges 19-20, the sordid story of the wanton infliction of the fatal abuse by perverse men from the city of Gibeah [in the tribal allotment of Benjamin] upon a visiting Levite’s ‘concubine’.

¹² See especially Matthew 5:21-22.

punishment for the shedding of human blood, for 'Cities of Refuge' to which anyone accused of manslaughter, guilty or not, can run for safe haven.

Vengeance – or Redemption? Outrage – or Wisdom?

The subject of actual cities of refuge spread throughout a nation – i.e. *arei miqlat* - is a fascinating subject. The idea is completely unique to the Torah. No other nation has ever had such a thing – or ever will. This is something the Holy One of Israel designed for the people He loves. It cannot be matched by any idea or benevolence conceived by man. The Cities of Refuge are irrefutable proof – to us and to the world - that the Holy One is a God not only of *power* and *justice* - but of *wisdom, compassion, patience, mercy and forgiveness*. In the Holy One’s Persona and Kingdom, *might does not make right* - and *neither does a sense of outrage arising from a cause or offense*. Mankind was created in the Holy One’s ‘image’, and thus were made to reflect all His Divine Attribute. As a result of the Fall, however, human beings have lost their connection to the Holy One’s wisdom, compassion, patience, mercy and forgiveness attributes. Unfortunately, now the only aspects of His ‘image’ with which fallen men are able to connect are His abstract thought, speech, purposing, and power attributes. Having the latter without the former is a recipe for calamitous disaster. It makes man become a very dangerous kind of voracious, highly emotional, and extremely devious animal – instead of the light-bringer and blessing-dispenser he was created, designed, and is still destined to be.

The result of having a connection to the Holy One’s attributes of abstract thought, speech, purposing, and power without any connection to His offsetting attributes of wisdom, compassion, patience, mercy and forgiveness, you see, is that whenever a person or a member of his family, nation or ethnic group, suffers damage, injury, insult, of offense at the hands of another human being, what fallen men lust for is *quick vengeance*. They use their gifts of abstract thought and speech to falsely label this as ‘*justice*’. If you want to see what this looks like, just watch the public reaction – usually fueled by inflammatory news reports – the next time a child is thought to have been abused, injured or killed, left in a hot vehicle in summertime, or separated from their parents or putative parents in the course of an attempt at illegal entry into a foreign country. Or you can watch how people rush to judge a celebrity or sports figure, minister, or politician who gets accused of a crime, utters phrase or sentence that is not deemed ‘politically correct’, or engages in any behavior the self-righteous media, political, or religious elites of the day regard as an indiscretion. Watch how people who do not even know the persons involved start focusing time and passion upon, and expressing moral outrage over, and issue calls for ‘justice’ concerning, situations which have nothing whatever to do with them, and over which they have incomplete and inadequate knowledge.

But man’s idea of vengeance never solved a single problem in the world – and it never will. Man’s idea of vengeance *just makes things worse*. It just *causes*

tensions to escalate – and *multiplies sorrows*. It just ensures retaliation by those who associate with the one[s] against whom vengeance was taken. Man's idea of vengeance turns an earthquake into a *tsunami*. The Holy One – the Creator of both the offended and the offender in every situation and controversy – says '*not so fast!*' He wants to inject His attributes of wisdom, compassion, patience, mercy and forgiveness into the situation to slow down the rushing river of emotion that boils over every time someone's physical or symbolic blood is spilt.

The Holy One defines *justice* as something far, far different than *vengeance*. He does not think in terms of 'right and wrong', 'moral and immoral', 'fair and unfair', or 'good and evil' – He thinks in terms of *wisdom*. He always wants cooler, calmer heads - and softer, more compassionate hearts - to prevail. He wants *real solutions* – not vengeance. He prefers redemption – or at least pathways of redemption – to punishment every time. That is why the Holy One called for His Redeemed People to do things differently than any other nation of the world ever had or ever would. That is why He called for the establishment of easily accessible *arei miqlat* on both sides of the Jordan River. The Holy One wanted to make sure safe cities – where wisdom and compassion ruled - to be conveniently located throughout the land of His Dominion. He wanted to assure that in His land of dominion no person –Hebrew or foreigner/sojourner - would have to suffer man's idea of 'vengeance'. These 6 cities – and the refuge they were established to provide - were to be freely accessible to everyone, of any nation, tribe, or tongue.

***How Are You Doing on Making Your Presence, Your Home,
Your Neighborhood, and Your Community
a 'City of Refuge' In Your World?***

All cities of refuge were also Levitical cities. Having Levites and priests there was a big part of making justice available instead of vengeance. The Holy One intends for those who know Him best and whose lives are committed to serve Him faithfully should be able to *calm other people down* and *focus them on long term solutions and wisdom* rather than immediate bloodlust and vengeance. They, above all people on the earth, should be the ones who sprinkle living water on emotionally charged people and situations instead of adding fuel to their raging fire.

How about you, Dear One? Do you understand what the calling of true people of the Holy One is in relation to the emotionally charged situations and controversies that arise from time to time? Such situations and controversies are springing up everywhere in today's world. If they are not arising right in front of you in your house or neighborhood or community, just turn on the news. But did you know that we are not to get caught up in other people's 'drama, trauma and offense'. We are

called to be a place of refuge from such things. We are called to inject wisdom, compassion, patience, kindness, and forgiveness into every situation and controversy – not throw gasoline on the fire like the rest of the world does. We are to keep focused on long-term solutions, not keeping score between the parties, declaring what is ‘fair and unfair’, ‘right and wrong’, ‘moral and immoral’, or ‘good and evil’. Do not let yourself get swept up in the emotion, the self-righteous talk trash, or the outrage. Do not let yourself get swept up in rhetoric, the ideology, or the accusation. The world does not need to hear another emotionally-charged or judgmental opinion – it needs someone who will remain calm, pray, seek wisdom from Heaven, and then, if the situation falls within the person’s Divinely ordained sphere of influence, patiently work with all parties involved in the controversy to achieve real, meaningful, lasting solutions to the underlying problems and ultimate sources of controversy.

You see, Dear One, the truth is that you and your household are called to become the ultimate city of refuge. People should not just come to you and your household for comfort, or sympathy, or your opinion, advice, or pity. They should come to you for wisdom, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. And what you should offer is not an attitude, a sense of outrage, the expression of moral judgment, or the placing of blame – what you should offer is a pathway to resolution inspired by none other than the *Ruach* – *i.e.* Empowering Breath - of the Holy One of Israel.

We are here to fix the world for posterity, not contribute to the havoc of the present in the name of ‘righting wrongs’. We are to never let ourselves get caught up in either outrage or a rush to judgment. We are to never let our tongue or our influence be hijacked by the adversary and used as an instrument of incitement or condemnation. We are most definitely not called to form opinions or express our judgments about people or situations [a] about which we have insufficient knowledge through personal observation [hearsay most definitely does not count] and [b] which are outside our Divinely established and currently operative sphere of influence.

Nations go to war - that is just a part of life. Criminal prosecutions occur and investigations and lawsuits proceed – that is the world’s governmental system at work. People complain and hate or use everything from the gift of speech to physicality inappropriately - that is just the expected result of the Fall. Unless we are called to physically engage in combat on behalf of our nation, or to sit on the bench as judge or in the chair as an eyewitness or as a juror, as for us and our houses, for Heaven’s sake we are to remain above the fray - as faithful agents of shalom and ambassadors of reconciliation and restoration.

People should not just come to us and our households primarily for comfort, or sympathy - much less our opinions, advice, pity or financial assistance. They should come to us for wisdom, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. And what we should offer them is not a self-righteous attitude, a sense of outrage, an expression of moral judgment, or the placing of blame. What we should offer them is a pathway to resolution inspired by none other than the Ruach – i.e. Empowering Breath - of the Holy One of Israel. So leave leaping to conclusions to the pagans of this world, Dear Reader. Let all who love the Holy One and wish to serve and represent Him honestly in this world put away our vigilante daggers and lynch ropes. Let us stow our crusader capes, hoods, cliché-slogans, eye rolls and stare downs. Let us stash our self-righteous frowns and activist rhetoric - and all the inflammatory social media posts and video clips that go with them - in the trash bin where they belong. A refuge is a *safe place* - a place of *respite*, of *refreshing*, and, most of all, of *hope*. And we are called to be places of refuge. The only thing that people – even those who have been involved in horrible stuff - should see in your eyes, glean from your facial expressions and body language, and hear in your voice is something like the following:

*“You are safe here. I will not judge you.
I will not take either your side or that of your adversary/accuser.
What you can trust me to do is recognize your humanity,
pray for you, and seek – and share with you as and when I receive –
whatever counsel Our Mutual Creator wishes to give me for you.
I will not think myself better than you,
or pretend to be more holy or righteous than you.
I will not moralize or preach to you.
I will not berate or condemn you. I will form no opinions about you.
I will be happy to let the legal system sort out whatever has happened thus far
and what should happen next. I will not try to influence that in any way.
In the meantime, you are innocent until proven guilty here,
and the only issue you will need to address with me is
‘how can we take practical steps to fix whatever led up to whatever happened
so that it never happens – to you at least – ever again?’”*

Think of Yeshua’s response to the woman caught in adultery – and the angry men who wanted to accuse, humiliate, and stone her. He was not the appointed forum for her prosecution or judgment. He did not pretend to be. Meditate upon the calmness and peace He demonstrated to both the woman and the self-righteous crowd of haters her accusers, and the words He spoke to both. Meditate upon these things long and hard. Note how His calmness, wisdom, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness changed the atmosphere and moved the situation from near riot toward a meaningful solution. Then go, and be like the Master – in every Divinely ordained sphere of influence in your life.

What Exactly Distinguishes a City of Refuge From Any Other City?

Regarding the 6 specific Levitical cities the Holy One decreed should be cities of refuge, the sages tell us the following special rules were historically applied¹³ to maximize their accessibility:

The [ruling council] is obligated to straighten the roads to the cities of refuge, to repair them and broaden them. They must remove all impediments and obstacles ... bridges should be built [over all natural barriers] so as not to delay one who is fleeing to [the city of refuge]. The width of a road to a city of refuge should not be less than thirty-two cubits.

"Refuge", "Refuge", was written at all crossroads so that those accused of killing another should recognize the way and turn there.

Notice that the *arei miqlat* concept originated *with the Holy One*, not with Moshe, with the tribal leaders, with the *kohanim* [priests], or with the people. Here is what the Holy One has to say on the subject:

When you pass over the Yarden into the land of Kana'an, establish cities to be arei miqlat [cities of refuge] for you, that the manslayer who kills any person unwittingly may flee there.

The cities are to be to you for refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer not die, until he stands before the witness throng for judgment.

The cities that you designate are to be for you six cities of refuge. Designate three cities beyond the Yarden, and three cities you are to give in the land of Kana'an; they are to be cities of refuge.

For the children of Yisra'el, and for the stranger and for the foreigner living among them these six cities will be for refuge; that everyone who kills any person unwittingly may flee there.

[Numbers 35:9-15]

Most of the *arei miqlat* were built on mountaintops. Since cities in that part of the world during the time frame of Torah were built with white limestone this meant that the cities of refuge would *gleam magnificently* in the sunshine or in the light of the moon. The reflection of either the sun's direct or indirect light off of the white limestone would act like the beacon of a lighthouse - easily visible from many miles away. Perhaps something like this is what the Master was talking about when He said to those who followed Him:

You are the light of the world — like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

[Matthew 5:14]

The world has more than enough darkness. In the faces and words and houses and cities of the people of the Holy One let there be light!

¹³See the chabad.org article 'From Our Sages', Parsha Matot-Massei.

The Daughters of Tzelofechad – Revisited

The story with which the fourth *sefer* of Torah will fittingly conclude is the uplifting tale of five fatherless women who passionately love the Holy One, His Ways, and the precious land of Eretz Yisrael. What we will read is the second installment of the Torah concerning the daughters of a man named *Tzelofechad*. You may recall that Tzelofechad was a member of the tribe of Menashe who had followed the majority to agree with the report of the 10 ‘spies’ at Kadesh Barnea, and had therefore died in the desert with the rest of his generation. As we have previously learned, Tzelofechad had no sons – just 5 daughters¹⁴. In parsha *Pinchas* we learned that these five women had a passion for Eretz Yisrael that warmed the heart of the Holy One, and that, therefore, the Holy One granted them an inheritance in the Promised Land just as if they had been sons.¹⁵ In today’s aliyah something about Tzelofechad’s daughters is bothering some of the elders of the tribe of Menashe. The elders of Menashe, therefore, come to Moshe with a Torah question. After all, as we learned recently, the tribe of Menashe is about to split in half. One half of the eligible husbands of Tzelofechad’s daughters are about to forfeit any inheritance in Eretz Yisrael – where the daughters of Tzelofechad want to live – in favor of the hillsides of Moav¹⁶. The elders of Menashe are looking ahead. They are thinking about the possible scenarios that might present themselves when the daughters of Tzelofechad marry. Depending on whom these girls marry, the tribal allotment of Menashe will potentially increase – or decrease. So, they pose to Moshe two questions. Here are the two questions the elders pose:

Problem No. 1:

If [Tzelofechad’s daughters] are married to any of the sons of the [other] tribes ...

The elders feared that if Tzelofechad’s daughters married men from another tribe, the inheritance granted to them by the Holy One’s gracious decree would

¹⁴ For more information regarding the ‘first chapter’ of Torah’s chronicle of the daughters of Tzelofechad, see the Rabbi’s son’s commentary in *Wednesday’s Shiur* of Parsha *Pinchas*.

¹⁵ In Joshua 17:1-6 we will meet these women one final time, as they finally claim their shares in the allotment of Menashe: “So [the lot] was for the rest of the children of Menashe according to their families: for the children of Avi-Ezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asri’el, and for the children of Shekhem, and for the children of Hefer, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Menashe the son of Yosef according to their families. But Tzelofechad, the son of Hefer, the son of Gil’ad, the son of Makhir, the son of Menashe, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlach, and No’ah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. They came near before El’azar the Kohen, and before Y’hoshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, the Holy One commanded Moshe to give us an inheritance among our brothers: therefore according to the mitzvah of the Holy One he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father. There fell ten parts to Menashe, besides the land of Gil’ad and Bashan, which is beyond the Yarden; because the daughters of Menashe had an inheritance among his sons. The land of Gil’ad belonged to the rest of the sons of Menashe.” [This] was the lot for the tribe of Menashe; for he was the firstborn of Yosef. As for Makhir the firstborn of Menashe, the father of Gil’ad, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gil’ad and Bashan.

⁸ According to verse 1 of chapter 37 the ones bringing up the issue are “the heads of the fathers’ [houses] of the family of the children of Gil’ad, son of Makhir”. As we learned in Numbers 32:39-42, these descendants of Menashe settled their families in the area east of the Jordan, around Gilead. Deuteronomy 2:9-12.

ultimately flow away from the tribe Menashe and vest in their husband's tribe(s).

Problem No. 2:

*When the yovel [jubilee] of the children of Yisra'el occurs
their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they belong:
so will their inheritance be taken away from the portion of the tribe of our fathers.*

[Numbers 37:3-4]

The elders noted further that when the *Yovel* [Jubilee] came about in 50 years, all or part of the land the Holy One allocated to Tzelofechad might under certain circumstances actually wind up falling into the possession of men belonging to a tribe into which one or more of Tzelofechad's daughters married.

Borrowing Trouble – or Planning Ahead?

Have you ever wondered why the elders of Menashe cared so much what would happen in future generations – or at some long distant yovel (jubilee) year - to the allotment of their deceased relative Tzelofechad? Weren't they just 'borrowing trouble' - and *tribal trouble*, at that? Not one of these elders – or anyone in the camp except Kalev of the tribe of Y'udah, and Y'hoshua of the tribe of Efrayim - had ever seen that portion of the land in which the half-tribe of Menashe in question would one day settle. It is not like these men would be personally affected by the problems they described to Moshe – they would likely be long dead before either of the problems they posited to Moshe presented themselves in any meaningful way. So why did these men not just let the Holy One make this inheritance thing 'happen'? Why did they have to think so ... *cross-generationally*?

We are, of course, not specifically told the motivation of the elders of Menashe for bringing the matter up at this point in time. Some might opine that the elders of Menashe were just mean-spirited capitalists motivated by inter-tribal jealousy at best and, at worst, blatant greed. Others might speculate that they were chauvinistic 'control freaks' looking for a way to impose their macho masculine will on defenseless women like Tzelofechad's daughters. Still others might give them the benefit of the doubt, saying that they were probably just trying to rightly divide the word of truth, and were forward thinkers acting responsibly to assure peaceful resolution in advance of a potentially divisive situation.

Whatever we think about the motivation of the elders of Menashe, however, from the fact, the manner, and the timing of their asking the questions they asked, and the fact that the Holy One saw fit to include in the Torah those questions and the answers thereto which Moshe gave, we should understand if nothing else that *the promised land was never intended to be the inheritance of 'B'nei Yisrael' in a communistic sense of one for all, all for one, yours is mine, mine is yours, and share and share alike.*

The *land of Israel* was never intended to be a commune. The land of Israel was, instead, ordained by the Holy One to be the inheritance of *specific people* in *specific clans* in *specific tribes*. The Holy One has divided the land of Israel, and allocated it *according to the names of the men he brought forth out of Egyptian bondage*. He has entrusted the land to the generations of those men, according to their tribes, their clans, and their paternal lineages. When you look at a map of Israel therefore, or walk upon its soil, try to remember that in the Holy One's eyes *every square inch is some specific person and family's inheritance*.

Problems that Would Cross a Rabbi's Eyes

Surprisingly, we are not told specifically by Torah that Moshe took this particular aspect of the daughters of Tzelofechad controversy to the Holy One¹⁷. Instead we are told that when the elders of Menashe posed the questions mentioned above Moshe made a pronouncement "in the Name" of the Holy One. Moshe declared:

***Let them be married to whom they think best, provided:
only into the family of the tribe of their father are they to marry.***

***Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Yisra'el,
shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father,
that the children of Yisra'el may possess every man the inheritance of his fathers.***

***So shall no inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe;
for the tribes of the children of Yisra'el shall cleave everyone to his own inheritance.***

[Numbers 37:8-9]

The daughters of Tzelofechad were, as aforesaid, *fatherless*. They had no "papa" to arrange or approve suitable marriages for them as was the case with the other young women of B'nei Yisrael. Notice that Moshe did not specify *by name* whom these fatherless young ladies should marry. He did not arrange their marriages. He said: "let them be married *to whom they think best*" – BUT he narrowed the "pool" of potential suitors to men within the "family of the tribe of their father."

The Pool of Eligible Suitors

Of whom would the pool of potential suitors authorized by Moshe's decree consist? Numbers 27:1 tells us that Tzelofechad had been "*the son of Hefer, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir¹⁸, the son of Menashe*". That means that the "potential groom pool" for Tzelofechad's daughters would be all the males of Machir's line. What do we know of Machir? Genesis 50:23 notes that Machir was

⁹ Compare Numbers 27:5, where we are told in connection with the first controversy concerning the daughters of Tzelofechad that "*Moshe brought their case before the Holy One.*"

¹⁸ Machir is mentioned at the very close of Genesis. Genesis 50:23 notes that Yosef saw descendants born to him from both Menashe and Efrayim in Egypt, yet with a different phrase for each: "Yosef lived to see children of the third generation of Ephraim; additionally *the children of Machir son of Menashe were born upon Yosef's knees.*"

Menashe's firstborn - and perhaps only - son. He was born in Egypt, and sired children who Torah describes as "*born upon Yosef's knees.*" This means that Machir's children were adopted by, and lived with, their grandfather Yosef – much like Yosef's biological sons had been adopted by, and lived with, their grandfather Ya'akov.

Growing up with Yosef, the children of Machir would have instilled within them the passion for Eretz Yisrael that drove Yosef to call his brothers to his deathbed and compel them not to entomb him in Egypt but to instead put his bones in a coffin and take him to Israel in the day of their freedom. Here is the Biblical account:

Yosef said to his brothers, "I am dying, but the Holy One will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov." Yosef then took an oath of the children of Yisra'el, saying, "The Holy One will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."
[Genesis 50:24-25]

Though slavery in Egypt lasted for over 300 more years, Yosef's bones were never buried there. The sons of Machir "born on Yosef's knees" and their descendants kept Yosef's dream alive. They kept his bones in a coffin in their slave camps – waiting for the opportunity of freedom to bury them in the promised land. Generations came and went, and in at least some of Machir's descendants, the dream lived on. When they left Egypt on the night Egypt's firstborn were stricken they carried the bones of Yosef with them. **Exodus 13:19**. They carried those old, dry bones all the way – and those old bones, in that old coffin, remained in the camp of Menashe all the way up to today's aliyah. And they cried out to Machir's descendants – "We will accept *nothing less than Eretz Yisrael!*" The question is, would any of those descendants *sh'ma*? Some we are told did not.

The children of Machir the son of Menashe went to Gil'ad, and took it, and dispossessed the Emori who were therein. Moshe gave Gil'ad to Machir the son of Menashe; and he lived therein.
[Numbers 32:39-40]

In case you have forgotten Gil'ad was in the land of Moav – just short of *Eretz Yisrael*. And it appears that the male descendants of Machir were willing to settle for Gil'ad, and sell out the inheritance in Eretz Yisrael for which the bones in the box at the center of their part of the camp cried out. But not the daughters of Tzelofechad. They *sh'ma*-ed the voice of Yosef. In their spirits the fire of Yosef still burned. And they would not be denied their share of Yosef's inheritance in the Land of the Kena'ani.

The Marriages of Tzelofechad's Daughters

Tzelofechad's daughters had one more chance to "opt out" of the promised land.

They could choose as husbands men from Menashe who had decided to settle on the fertile hills of Moav. Or they could choose as husbands men who, as did their common ancestor, had eyes only for Israel. Which do you think they chose? Which would YOU have chosen, Dear Reader? Here is how Torah reveals what they chose.

Even as the Holy One commanded Moshe, so did the daughters of Tzelofechad: for Machlah, Tirtzah, and Hoglah, and Milkah, and Noach¹⁹, the daughters of Tzelofechad, were married to their father's brothers' sons. They were married into the families of the sons of Menashe the son of Yosef; and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.

Well done, young ladies! See you in the Promised Land – and on the front lines of the Grand Redemptive Plan of our Bridegroom-King!

Don't Close the Book; Just Turn the Page

The book of Numbers has now concluded its chronicle of the 'way stations' of the wilderness. We now know how over the course of 38 ½ years the Holy One gave to our ancestors – and to us, if we will receive it - the frame of reference, and all the preparation our hearts and minds should need to receive the fullness of the revelation which *Sefer D'varim* entails. If we have been listening and learning these past few weeks, we are now ready to receive the final prophetic empowerment in the strength of which we will enter into the rest the Holy One has planned for us.

Good Sabbath Beloved – and, the Holy One willing, I will see you next week for the beginning of our next great adventure – the study of *Sefer D'varim*. Until then: ***Chazak! Chazak! Venitchazeik!*** – i.e. *be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened together!*

Questions for Today's Study

1. Here are some questions about the *arei miqrat* [cities of refuge].

- [A] Who was to have the right to flee to the cities of refuge?
- [B] From whom were such people fleeing?
- [C] What was the purpose of having cities of refuge?
- [D] How many cities of refuge did the Holy One say there should be?

¹⁹ The daughters of Tzelofechad were neither heads of state nor great warriors. Yet cities were named after them on account of the inspiration they provided. According to Rav Reuven Taragin in his essay, "*Matot - Masei: What is the Final Episode of Sefer Bamidbar?*", in 1910, while a team of archeologists was digging in the region just north of Shechem (within the tribal land of Menashe), they discovered a storehouse of jugs dating back to the mid-eighth century B.C.E. This tied the jugs to the time of Jeroboam - centuries before the destruction of the First Temple. One of the jugs bore the city name of *Noa*, and another the name *Hogla* - two of the daughters of Tzelofechad. The city of Tirza, likewise bearing the name of one of Tzelofechad's daughters and found in this region, is mentioned in I Kings 15 and 16.

[E] Draw a map on a separate sheet of paper showing the locations of all the cities of refuge.

[F] What was the responsibility of the “*avenger of blood*”?

[G] Look up the word “avenger” in Strong’s Concordance and in Gesenius. Write the Hebrew word and describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

2. The Holy One next discusses the circumstances under which the taking of a human life will necessitate the death penalty.

[A] List the aggravating factors which, if present, mean that one who killed another must be killed.

[B] Why, under such circumstances, must the killer be killed?

[C] How did the Holy One direct that the execution of one who had killed another person under such aggravating circumstances to be carried out?

[D] Who was to determine whether these aggravating factors did or did not exist?

[E] In Strong’s, look up the Hebrew word for the person(s) who were to determine whether the aggravating factors did or did not exist. Write the Hebrew word and its root, and the definitions of both.

[F] Once someone fled to a city of refuge, how long did that person have to stay there to be guaranteed safety?

[G] How long did the Holy One say this practice of blood avenging and cities of refuge should continue?

3. In verses 30-32 the Holy One gives three ordinances concerning the trial and treatment of those accused of killing another.

[A] How many witnesses were required before one could be found guilty?

[B] In what two circumstances was “ransom” forbidden?

[C] Look up the word that English versions of verses 31-32 translate as “ransom”. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

4. Why do you think the Holy One was so adamant that the land was not to be “polluted”?

[A] Look up in Strong’s Concordance and in Gesenius the word our English Bibles translate as *pollute*. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew consonants and vowel markings, and in English, then describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

[B] Look up in Strong’s Concordance and in Gesenius the word our English Bibles translate as *atonement*. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew consonants and vowel markings, and in English, then describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

5. The concluding chapter of *B’midbar* returns to a very interesting subject - the daughters of Tzelofechad. Here we learn about the marriages of these 5 daughters

of the Holy One.

[A] Let's review: From what tribe was Tzelofechad?

[B] In what passage have we met Tzelofechad's daughters before? [Give the name of the parsha and the book, chapter and verse; then summarize what happened in that passage]

[C] Why were the elders of the tribe of Menashe concerned about who the daughters of Tzelofechad married?

[D] Write the names of Tzelofechad's daughters, and beside each name, write what that name means in English [Hint: use Smith's Bible Dictionary or Strong's Concordance].

[E] What was the Holy One's decree regarding whom these girls would marry?

[F] How did these girls respond to the Holy One's decree?

[G] How would you contrast or compare the attitude and values of the daughters of Tzelofechad with the attitude and values of the leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben as demonstrated in Wednesday's *psukim*?

6. In the concluding verses of this week's Haftarah, Yirmayahu expresses a hope for not only the future reconciliation of Israel and B'nei Yisrael, but the eventual fulfillment of the Holy One's purpose and destiny for Ya'akov's seed.

Will you not from this time cry to me, 'My Father; you are the guide of my youth'?

[Jeremiah 3:4]

*If you will return, Yisra'el, says the Holy One, if you will return to me,
and if you will put away your abominations out of my sight;
then you will not be removed; and you will swear,
As the Holy One lives, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness;
and the nations will bless themselves in him, and they will glory in him.*

[Jeremiah 4:1-2]

[A] What is the first key to these things, according to Yirmayahu 3:4?

[B] According to Yirmayahu 4:1-2, what four things does the Holy One say B'nei Yisrael needs to do?

[C] According to Yirmayahu 4:2, if B'nei Yisrael does these things, what will happen?

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

[A] In James 4:11 what one important thing does the Holy One, through Ya'akov, tell us never to do?

[B] What do you think is the reason the Holy One is so adamant that we do not judge [i.e. moralize about, think of or discuss in abstract or emotional terms, criticize, condemn, vindicate, or pass judgment concerning] one another?

*May you know the overflowing and overwhelming grace of the Holy One,
and may you live in the counsel of His **Goel**.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today

Job 35:5-11 [The wise counsel of *Elihu*]

Look to the heavens, and see.

See the skies, which are higher than you.

If you have sinned, what effect do you have against him?

If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?

If you are righteous, what do you give him?

Or what does he receive from your hand?

Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are;

and your righteousness may profit a son of man.

"By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out;

They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.

*But none says, 'Where is **God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night,***

Who teaches us more than the animals of the eretz,

and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?'