

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Devarim:*** **Deuteronomy 2:8-25**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 1:10-15**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Timothy 3:3**

We crossed over before our brothers

[Deuteronomy 2:8]

Today's Meditation is Lamentations 2:1-14;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Avot* [Fathers/Patriarchs]

Vana'avor me'et acheinu v'nei-Esav ha-yoshvim b'Se'ir - And we crossed over before our brethren, the sons of Esav, who dwell in Seir **Deuteronomy 2:8a.**

It is a question that must be asked sooner or later: 'How well do you play with others?' We are called to be salt to the earth and a light to all nations; that means we can't stay safely tucked away in isolation forever. After Egypt the Holy One allured us into the Wilderness for a season of getting to know Him and His Ways, but avoiding contact with the world's other cultures long-term has never been, and will never be, an option for us. Our King has promised to set a beautiful table for us – but He has made it clear that the table He sets will be situated squarely in the presence of our enemies. In accordance with the Avrahamic Covenant, some people groups we are scheduled to encounter as we venture out of the wilderness will bless us, and as a result will be blessed by the Holy One; other people groups we encounter along the way will curse us, and ... well, you probably know how that turns out, don't you? It is not about military might; it is just the outworking of the law of sowing and reaping. Step right up, nations of the world, and bless us ... or curse us ... to your heart's delight. We are the field; you are the farmers. Choose your seed, and start sowing. Just remember, what you sow, that you shall also reap!

Edomites, Amorites, and Moabites – Oh My!

The list of foreign people groups with whom we are going to have to learn to interact and coexist contains some pretty notorious characters – and some pretty hostile cultures. Who are these guys? They are descendants of Noach, like us – but they look ... well ... *different!* They eat, drink, and sleep somewhat like we do. They have hopes, dreams, emotions, and curiosity like other members of our species - but that is about where the similarities end. They have very different histories. They have vastly different worldviews. They operate under a totally different framework of 'givens'. They profess drastically different beliefs. They

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speak strange and unintelligible languages. They dress differently. They live by a patently different set of priorities. Now that we have re-appeared in their neighborhood, what kind of attitude, reactions, and behaviors can we expect them to exhibit? Will they challenge us? Will they fear us? Will they hate us? Will they blame us for all their problems? Will they mock us? Will they plot evil against us the way Balak and Bila'am did? Will they try to seduce us away from our Covenant with the Holy One the way the Midyanites did? Will they try to drive us into the sea the way the Amalekites and the Amorites did?

Are any of these other ethnic groups destined to play a role in the great drama of world history? Could they, their children, and children's children, also be part of the Holy One's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to Edenic beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*? If so, what are our rules of engagement *vis-à-vis* them? How can we know how we are to behave toward – and even around - them? Are '*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*', '*do not render evil for evil*', '*love your neighbor*', or '*love your enemies*', even viable options? Is it even possible for us to coexist on the same planet with them? Is violent conflict inevitable? Is '*kill or be killed*' the only solution?

Is Violent Conflict With Other Cultures The Only Solution?

Moshe knows all about violence. He has been both a *victim of violence* [Exodus 2:2-3] and a *perpetrator of it* [Exodus 2:11-12; see also Exodus 32:26-27 and Numbers 31:12-17]. But, as his day on earth wind toward a close, I think he would be the first to tell you that, despite the pain he has endured and the human suffering he has inflicted along the way, his *has been a richly blessed life*. Born of slaves, by the grace of the Holy One he wound up being raised in a palace alongside the princes of Egypt. A vigilante-murderer who had to flee the country of his birth in shame, by reason of a burning bush encounter he never sought he has served 40 years as the point-of-the-spear prophet of the Most High. Wow, what a ride! This man has been the recipient of so much wisdom and revelation in the course of his four decades of regular face-to-face encounters with the Creator of the Universe that he could spend the next forty years – if he had them - trying to download that wisdom to and develop that revelation with the nation he has been called upon to lead. He is 120, and *oh, the things he has seen!* *Oh the mercies He has been shown!* *Oh the momentous events He has witnessed!* *Oh, the conversations to which he has been privy!* *Oh the miracles he has had the privilege of participating in!*

At the burning bush Moshe asked the Holy One to reveal to him His Name – and the Holy One responded in ways Moshe could not even fathom. **Exodus 3:13-16**; see also **Exodus 34:5-8**. In the dark days after *chet ha-egel* [the calf sin] Moshe cried out

passionately to the Holy One to *teach him His ways* - and the Holy One has been doing that ever since! Moshe also asked the Holy One to *show him His Glory* – and the Holy One has now done that as well – many, many times over². Literally hundreds of times over the past four decades the Immortal and Invisible One has stepped out of eternity into time and out of infinity into Moshe’s range of hearing and field of vision. Indeed, the Bridegroom-King’s voice is now every bit as familiar to Moshe as his own. From the burning bush to Pharaoh’s palace, to the Sea of Reeds; to the canopy of fire above Sinai, then to the Cleft of the Rock; in the *Mish’kan* [Tabernacle], and beyond; the Holy One has spoken with Moshe more than with any other man who had ever lived. The Great King has made Moshe a regular in His Courts. He has revealed Himself to Moshe in all His Majesty and Beauty, Goodness and Kindness. As a result of this, over the past four decades Moshe has been given revelation on so many aspects of human life, redemption, and destiny, at so many levels! If he had time he could now write a series of masterpieces that would fill the Earth. But alas, time is something Moshe does not have. His window of opportunity to teach what he has learned of the ways and thoughts and plans of the Holy One to the Redeemed Community is closing very, very quickly. The prophet has only 36 days to live. He is not going to be the one who leads the Redeemed of the Holy One in the next phase of their world-changing mission. For him, it is now or never.

So be it. *Carpe diem, nam cras moreris*³. This is Moshe’s moment, and he intends to use it to the fullest. The aging prophet has therefore gathered the elders of every tribe together to exhort those who will actually enter into and possess the land with a final series of insights and instructions. Moshe’s retrospective on the last forty years has already taken us through the Wilderness of Paran, where we succumbed to the sin of the spies, experienced Korach’s rebellion, and spent 38 long years watching our elder statesmen die off. Moshe has finally moved on from those painful memories. He is now ready to talk to us about the next set of challenges we faced – the ones we encountered after we crossed the Jordan Rift Valley and visited the Trans-Jordan region. The next subjects he wants to cover are the necessity of *respecting your neighbors* and the importance of *recognizing, understanding, and dealing with your enemies*.

Who Will Be For Us ... And Who Will Be Against Us?

Moshe’s retrospective analysis of our journey has finally reached the season in which the Holy One has introduced us to and taught us to deal with our

² See Exodus 16:10; Exodus 24:16-17; Exodus 40:34-35; Leviticus 9:23; Numbers 14:10; Numbers 16:19,42; and Numbers 20:6.

³ This is a Latin phrase from a poem by Roman author Quintus Horatius Flaccus, commonly known as ‘Horace’. The quote is from Odes 1.11, which Horace wrote late in the first century BCE, right before the first appearance of Messiah. The phrase is usually translated ‘*Seize the day, for you may die tomorrow.*’

prototypical enemies. As you may remember, the Holy One made sure that we had to face six prophetic enemies in the course of our return to the land of the patriarchs. Those prototypical adversaries, each of which represents one of the types of human/cultural opposition we will face in the course of our Covenant service on this earth, were introduced to us as:

1. the *Edomi* [whose tactic of choice was/is/will be bellicose language, intimidation and threats of extinction];
2. the *Aradi* [whose tactic of choice was/is/will be stealthily laying wait and taking captives under cover of night],
3. the *Emori* [whose tactic of choice is full-out violent assault in broad daylight],
4. the *Moavi* [whose tactic of choice is flinging negativity verbally and bringing in mercenaries],
5. *Bila'am*, the False Prophet of the one world order [whose tactic of choice were/are/will be flattery followed by sensual seduction and idolatry], and
6. the *Midyani* [whose tactics were/are/will be distraction from mission and a false form of religion, focusing on form rather than on substance, and on following a radical ideology rather than actually knowing and *sh'ma*-ing the Creator of the Universe].

Moshe's retrospective of our interactions with the nations of the world begins with a discussion of *acheinu v'nei Esav* - i.e. our brethren, sons of Esav⁴. When we entered the world of the *Edomi*, they made sure we knew right up front that we were not going to be friends. Edomi are extremely territorial, and they tend to be obsessed with all *things of the flesh*. They obsess over food, over drink, over material possessions, and over the mating phenomenon. They are slaves to sentimentality, sensuality and sexuality. They consider us competition. So, they bluster. They rant. They rage. They bare their teeth and rattle their sabers. They put on a show of force, in hopes that they can intimidate us and make us leave them alone. They vehemently refused to allow us to so much as set foot in 'their sphere'. They threaten us with genocide if we don't go away. But at least their threat – unlike some others we will meet - was conditional. *As long as we leave them alone*, and don't get anywhere close to their land, their women and children, or their 'stuff', they tend to leave us alone. Their message to us was the equivalent of: "*Don't poke the bear!*"

⁴ B'nei Yisrael will have quite a bit of interaction with the Edomi over the course of Biblical history. David will subjugate them, making their mighty men his servants, and stationing garrisons of Yehudi soldiers in Edomi territory. **II Samuel 8:13-14**. Sh'lomo took an Edomi as either a wife or concubine. **I Kings 11:1**. Both King Yoram [KJV, 'Joram'], King Amaziah, and King Ahaz will all have violent interaction with them. **II Kings 8:20-21; II Kings 14:1-7 & II Chronicles 28:16-17**. Edom's arrogance and treachery will also be mentioned in a few psalms [60, 108, and 137 particularly] and of prophecies by Yeshayahu [KJV, 'Isaiah'], Yirmayahu [KJV 'Jeremiah'], Yechezkiel [KJV 'Ezekiel'], Yoel [KJV 'Joel'], Amos, Ovidayah [KJV Obadiah], and Malachi.

That's just the way it goes, sometimes. We cannot - and aren't supposed to - make anyone be nice. We cannot dictate to anyone else how they should think, respond, or behave, or what they should value. That is not why we are here. We are here to offer, and model, a more excellent way. If they choose to reject it, we are to stay calm, try to understand, be gracious and respectful even in the face of rejection ... and just move on. We can't be warm, cozy friends with everyone. Like Ya'akov and Esav, we are fire and straw. They, like Esav, are focused on the material, the sensual, and the 'heat of the moment'; we, like Ya'akov, are focused on the spiritual, the holy, and the cross-generational/eternal. As long as we stay in our zone, and don't drift off into theirs, we can co-exist. But if we start dropping to their level, messing with their land, competing with them for wealth, for romance, for sentimentality, or for anything else in the material world that they think will make them happy for a moment - well, let's just say they will be on us like Hitler on a synagogue.

***Casing the Prophetic Neighborhood –
Are Our Closest Neighbors Blessers Ready to Sow and Reap Blessings
... Or cursers Itching to Sow and Reap Curses?***

After reminding us of our first encounter with Edom, Moshe recalls the reaction when we arrived in Moav. He wants us to realize that *the Holy One has planned out not only the place we are to live and use as a beachhead from which to launch the Great Kingdom-of-Heaven invasion He has ordained for us; He has also planned from the foundation of the world exactly who we will have as "neighbors"*. The places Moshe will describe in today's aliyah are areas the Holy One has ordained to make up the prophetic "neighborhood" of the Kingdom-of-Heaven-scented nation He intends for us to establish. The people groups living in the places Moshe talks about today will wind up being our prophetic "neighbors" once we take the Land. Each is designed to serve a purpose in keeping us *on alert, on mission, on task, and even on schedule*. So ... who has the Divine Bridegroom ordained will be the *neighbors* of His Betrothed Bride? Let's 'case' the 'hood'.

Moshe says the Holy One's instructions were: ***al-tatzar et-Moav*** – *i.e. do not push on/stress out Moav ... Deuteronomy 2:9(a).*

al-tatzar et-Moav v'al-titgar bam milchamah

Do not push upon/stress out Mo'av, neither contend with them in battle;

ki lo-eten lecha me'art'zo yerushah

for I will not give you of his land for a possession;

ki liv'nei-Lot natati et-Ar yerushah

because I have given `Ar to the children of Lot for a possession.

[Deuteronomy 2:9]

al-tetzurem v'al-titgar bam

and don't bother, nor contend with [the children of Ammon]

ki lo-eten me'ereetz b'nei-Amon lecha yerushah

for I will not give you of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession;

ki liv'nei-Lot netatiha yerushah

because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession.

[Deuteronomy 2:18-19]

We will have our issues with Moav⁵. They, like the other people groups we encountered to the South and East of the Jordan River, will not always be friendly. But the Holy One wants us to know that they are not going anywhere any time soon. They won't like us. They will wish we weren't here. But just as they are not going anywhere anytime soon, neither are we. Remember this, Dear Ones: ***When a man's ways please the Holy One, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*** Proverbs 16:7. And whether your neighbors – and enemies – treat you well or not, remember as well that for every hostile Sichon, Og, Balak and Bila'am there is an *Elazar*, a *Tamar*, a *Rachab*, and a *Ruth*. So, as Shaul taught, our mission is always to:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Be of the same mind toward one another.

Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.

Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Repay no one evil for evil.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

[Romans 12:14-18]

We are just going to have to learn to deal with hostile people groups living all around us – and they are just going to have to learn to deal with us. They may not 'play well with others' as the saying goes; but we are still supposed to do just that. We are under orders to stay calm, to remain above the fray whenever possible, and to keep laser-focused on the Will and Ways and Redemptive Plan of the Holy One. Dealing responsibly, compassionately, and wisely with neighbors who do not like us is just a part of the maturation protocols the Holy One has ordained for us – an essential component of the discipline and perseverance to which we are called.

⁵ B'nei Yisrael's relationships with the Moavi over the course of Biblical history will often be challenging. See, e.g., Judges 3:14-29; I Samuel 14:47; II Samuel 8:1-2; II Samuel 23:20; I Kings 11:1; II Kings 3:21 ff; II Kings 24:2; I Chronicles 18:1-2; II Chronicles 20:22-23; Ruth 1:1-2; Nehemiah 13:23; Isaiah 15:1 ff; Jeremiah 48:1 ff; Ezekiel 25:8 ff; Amos 2:1 ff; and Zephaniah 2:8-9.

This Too Is A Part of Our Redemptive Mission On Earth

Living alongside people who wish we would all be driven into the Sea is just a part of the refining fire the Holy One has designed for our purification. It is a part of our destiny as the Holy One's appointed messengers of hope, blessing, and redemption to the world. If, when, and to the extent that, in the face of our enemies' blood libels, senseless acts of violence, and shameless use of innocents as weapons and human shields, we let our human emotions and self-righteous sense of 'justice' lead us to lower ourselves to their level of thought, speech, and behavior, they win – and we dishonor both our Bridegroom-King and degrade ourselves⁶.

The key to our success in this regard – as well as every other spiritual endeavor – is to *keep our focus on the Holy One and stay actively engaged in the substance of what He has called us to be and do – i.e. the mitzvot of Torah*. To the extent we let ourselves get distracted from our *relationship with Him* on the one hand and from *the Great Mission to which He has called us* on the other, and start to worry or fret about what the world or the citizens of other nations think of us or say about us, we wind up wasting our time playing to the wrong audience. We are nowhere called to fear man or to seek his approval. We are called to live as if we have *an audience of One – i.e. the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and Ya'akov*. Our job in this life is simply to *fear Him, to tremble at His Word, to sh'ma, sh'mar and asah His Commandments, to model His attributes [especially His Wisdom, His Compassion, His Mercy, His Goodness, His Kindness, His patience/longsuffering, His forgiveness, and His covenant faithfulness], and to rejoice and rest securely in His Covenant love*.

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the Holy One who keep his commands and remain faithful to Yeshua. Revelation 14:12. We might as well embrace it. We might as well get over - and move beyond - our fleshly desires to be liked, to have the justness of our cause recognized, and to have the world acknowledge our arrogant claim to moral/ethical superiority. We will never, ever win the battle of public opinion. And what is more, we are not supposed to. The calling upon our lives is not about us attaining our comfort level – it is about His Great Plan of Redemption for all tribes, tongues, peoples and nations being

⁶ However, it should be duly noted from the account of Torah that with regard to each of these enemies except Edom and Moav the nation of Israel was Divinely sanctioned and empowered in defending itself and its people with force. After taking some of the Covenant People captive, Arad was attacked and overcome. When the kings of the Emori attacked Israel, Israel defended itself and was granted complete victory over the Edomi. When Bila'am and the Midyani conspired against Israel the Holy One actually commanded that Israel wage war on Midyan. Waging wars of national self-defense and self-preservation is something that Torah recognizes is, though not the norm, from time to time absolutely necessary and appropriate. The objective of such defensive wars, however, is to neutralize direct threats to Israel's national existence, make Israel's borders defensible, and make Israel's population safe from attack.

fulfilled in real time, in our day. Only a select few people from other nations with ears to *sh'ma* the thoughts and words of the Holy One will ever publicly come out and align themselves with us and our Kingdom Mission in any meaningful sense. Those few are worth it. And the good news is that the hearts of those people - and of the One Who called those people - will never be swayed against us, no matter what the haters among the nations may say about us or accuse us of doing.

The Holy One Has A Plan For the Hostile Nations Around Us

Moshe points out in today's aliyah that long before the arrival of the Redeemed Community in the Trans-Jordan the Holy One gave some of the lands there to *other people groups*. Examples are *Edom* – which He had given to the descendants of Esav – and *Moav* and *Ammon* – which He had given to the descendants of Lot. These three nations and people groups – and their proximity to us – are Divinely designed to serve an important prophetic purpose in the Grand Redemptive Plan. This should not be a surprise to us. It has always been a major principle of Torah that the Holy One our God loves and reaches out with open hands to *other peoples*. Israel is merely the nation chosen by the Holy One to serve as His Witness, along with Creation itself, in the sight of the other nations of earth. The Torah is to go forth from *Tziyon* and the Word of the Holy One from Jerusalem, and through the descendants of Yisrael that the Holy One's blessing upon all the nations of the earth is to be released. This is something the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven made perfectly clear the moment He called Avram to found a new nation. His last words to Avram in that first encounter were: ***v'nivreichu vecha kol mishpechot ha-adamah*** [*i.e. and through you shall all the families of the earth be blessed*]. **Genesis 12:3.**

The physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yisrael are a special case, much as a bride is special to her bridegroom, and as a queen to her king; but all nations contain the Holy One's Creation. He desires to bring forth a harvest of souls from every single tribe, tongue, nation, and people group on the planet. The great calling of the nations began early, with the example of Avram's right-hand man and close associate, *Eleazar of Damascus*. **Genesis 15:2; Genesis 24.** Naturally, when the Holy One delivered His People out of bondage in Egypt, they did not by any means leave Egypt alone. ***V'gam-erev rav alah itam*** [*i.e. they were accompanied by a mixed multitude of peoples from various nations*]. **Exodus 12:38.**

There is, you see, a very prominent place in the Holy One's Divine Plan – and in His Kingdom – for honest-to-goodness GENTILES. And, of course, those of other nations who reject Israel, and attack it, will play a part in the Grand Prophetic Drama of Redemption as well. It just will not be a very pleasant part.

The “Second Witness”

What exactly is the role the Holy One intends for honest-to-goodness gentiles to play? Where exactly do honest-to-goodness GENTILES fit into the Holy One’s grand plan of redemption? These are good questions. Is it possible that it is people – a remnant – of the nations of the Goyim who will respond to the Torah, and walk in it, as Messiah taught/teaches and lived/lives it, are ordained by the Holy One to become the second “witness” required for the judgment of the Holy One upon the earth? According to Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, and Acts 1:8, *two witnesses* are required before any judgment the Holy One recognizes can be handed down. Is Israel to be the *first witness* and are those among the nations who *sh’ma* His Torah to be the *second witness*? Will the receipt and acceptance of the Torah by *goyim*, who through the process of Torah submission can actually begin to see the sin of the world through the Holy One’s eyes and thereby administer justice in a manner consistent with the Holy One’s redemptive purposes, bring about the ‘final’ rebellion of those who refuse Torah, the rise of the Man of *Torah-rejection/opposition* [our English Bibles call him the ‘*man of Lawlessness*’] and usher in the events foreseen by Yochanan [John] the Revelator? Is this what Scripture means by “the fullness of the Gentiles”⁷? This is, of course, for further study. I merely wanted to get you thinking. So let’s return to our text.

The Holy One Has a Covenant With the Descendants of Lot

The Holy One said to His chosen people: ***I will not give you of his land for a possession; because I have given `Ar to the children of Lot for a possession.*** He said as well: ***I will not give you of the land of the children of `Ammon for a possession; because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession.***

The Holy One could not give to Israel land He had promised to others. To do that He would have had to *break His promise to the other nations*; and breaking a promise is not something the Holy One is about to do - whether it would be “convenient” for Israel or not. From this we should take great comfort. The Holy One is, you see, faithful and true to each of His covenants. He will not forsake or abandon His promises - even to accomplish another aspect of His Will. And that is very, very, very GOOD NEWS for all mankind!

A Lesson About the Nature of the Holy One’s Covenants With Man

The words the Holy One had Moshe record in Torah concerning His covenants with the descendants of Moav and Ammon is also certain evidence that the Holy One has not abandoned - and will never abandon - His covenant with “natural

⁷ In Romans 11:25, Shaul of Tarsus says: *“I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”*

Israel”. Each covenant the Holy One makes, you see, is *dependent upon* and *consistent with* His pre-existing covenants.

With the Holy One there is absolutely no ‘shadow of turning’ from His covenant promises. Hence we must understand that the so-called “*New Covenant*”⁸ can be nothing more than an *expansion of* the original, eternal covenant. *Any ‘new’ covenant the Holy One makes cannot retreat one yod or accent mark from his previous covenants.* The only thing that the ‘new covenant’ spoken of in the Apostolic Scriptures has changed is that the original covenant has now been *broadened* to incorporate the first fruits of the Goyim. The original covenants – with Avraham and his descendants, with the descendants of all those who were present at Sinai in the time of Matan Torah, and with David and his descendants – have not changed one whit. Nor will they – *ever!* This is because *all covenants made by the Holy One are consistent with each other and fit in perfect harmony with each other.* They HAVE TO BE - else He would be a liar!

The covenants the Holy One makes are like the universe He made. Much as the gravitational pulls of the millions of stars and planets and galaxies the Holy One created are all perfectly balanced against each other, in a perfect state of tension yet rest, so are all of the Holy One’s covenants perfectly balanced with, and complementary toward, and dependent upon each other. The *Noachic covenant* is perfectly balanced and flows in perfect harmony with and is dependent upon the *Edenic covenant*. The *Avrahamic covenant* is perfectly balanced and flows in perfect harmony not only with the Edenic covenant but also with the Noachic covenant. The *Sinaitic/Mosaic covenant* is perfectly balanced with and flows in perfect harmony not only with the prior covenants, but also with *the Davidic covenant*. The ‘*renewed covenant*’ introduced in the Song of Moshe, declared by the post-Exilic prophets and inaugurated, in seed form, by Yeshua of Natzret in His First Advent [often translated in English Bibles as ‘*new covenant*, but actually merely a return to the form of the Avrahamic, Sinaitic, and David covenants], is perfectly balanced with and flows in perfect harmony with all the prior covenants.

None of the Holy One’s covenants replace – or supersede - any other covenant He has made. Since He is unchanging, all His Covenants are by definition *permanent* covenants. They are all part of a Great Master Plan of Redemption. They are perfectly designed to work together – like the gravitational pulls of the stars and planets and galaxies of the universe work together to accomplish the purposes of

⁸ More properly an ‘*expanded*’ covenant. The ‘new covenant’ of which Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied and the writer of Hebrews announced is merely a pure, foundational revival of the ‘old’ covenant, with the only difference being that the words of the ‘old’ covenant are *written on the hearts* of the people who partner with the Holy One in the covenant.

the Holy One. This is not to say, of course, that certain aspects of the covenants of the Holy One *as they are seen by human eyes* do not pass from our view *for a season*. As at the instant of conjunction the moon become temporarily invisible to human eyes, so certain aspects associated with particular covenants likewise, in the Holy One's perfect timing, appear to human eyes to 'pass away'. The *bow in the clouds* shown to Noach is one example. Sometimes it is visible to human eyes, other times it is not. But it does not really 'pass away' in any spiritual sense – the bow is always there in the spiritual realm where human eyes cannot see.

Another example is the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle], with its priesthood and its *korbanot*. Like the bow in the clouds, it appears to human eyes, then disappears. But since the earthly *Mish'kan* and its *avodah* [service] was merely a 'scale model', or replica, on earth of a Heavenly reality that existed before the foundation of the world, the fact that the replica is nowhere to be seen does not mean that the *Mish'kan* has 'passed away'. It still exists and will always exist - it is just temporarily *in a state of eclipse*. It will re-emerge when the Holy One's timing is right, and when it re-emerges it *will shine brighter than ever*.

And of course the outward, visible sign of the Davidic covenant – *i.e.* a descendant of David to reign over Israel forever – likewise is presently in a state of eclipse. We cannot *see* such a king with our human eyes. But we know nonetheless that there *is* and will always be a descendant of David on Israel's throne. And we know that this King we cannot presently see with natural human eyes will re-emerge at the pre-ordained time – like the new moon - and all mankind will see it. As Messiah Yeshua put it:

*At that time the Son of Man will appear in the sky,
and all the nations of the earth will mourn.
They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky,
with power and great glory. And He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call,
and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other.*
[Matthew 24:30-31]⁹

Fe! Fi! Fo! Fum!

Another fascinating part of today's aliyah is Moshe's discussion of the ancient history of the lands of Edom, Moav, and Ammon. Moshe points out that each of those countries were once terrorized by *giants* – *i.e.* giants related to the Anakim the spies had reported seeing in Eretz Yisrael. Moshe goes further however to point out that when the Holy One promised the land of Edom to Esav's descendants, and promised the lands of Moav and Ammon to Lot's descendants, He did not stop with merely making promises to those nations – He physically went before those

⁹ This was prophesied in Torah – see, for instance, Genesis 49:10, and Numbers 24:17, and reiterated by the prophets in passages such as Zechariah 14:1-11.

nations into the lands He had promised them and by His enabling Presence empowered them to drive out before them all the giants who were residing there. Moshe pointed out that the lands Israel was passing through East of the Jordan all “used to be known” as lands of giants. But he points out *the Holy One struck/smote them* [Deuteronomy 2:21-22]. The Holy One did not purge those lands of oppression by giants *for Israel* – He did it *for the people of the affected nations*. And while the Holy One had not cleared the giants out of the Trans-Jordan region *for Israel*, the fact that He had done so even while Israel was tucked away in Pharaoh’s granary was a not-so-subtle message *to Israel*. The clear message was: *if the Holy One has done this for the nations of Esav and of Lot, in order to assure them their inheritance, how much more will He do it for you, whom He has called His am segulah (treasured possession)!* In fact, the Holy One concludes today’s aliyah with this marvelous promise:

Hayom hazeh achel tet pachdeicha veyir'ateicha
This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you

al-penei ha-amim tachat kol ha-shamayim
on the peoples who are under the whole sky,

asher yishme'un shim'acha veragzu
who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble,

v'chalu mipaneicha
and be in anguish because of you.
[Deuteronomy 2:25]

Pssst. Don’t tell anyone, but it is a very short distance from being “dreaded” and “feared” - to being *hated*. Just because the Holy One loves and is faithful to His covenant with the descendants of Lot, Yishmael, and Esav, does not mean that all our relations with them will be pleasant, or that we are to seek too close a relationship. Moshe will later tell us, on behalf of the Holy One:

An `Ammoni or a Moavi shall not enter b'k'hal Adonai
[into the community of the Holy One];
even to the tenth generation
none belonging to them will enter b'k'hal Adonai
[into the community of the Holy One] forever:
because they didn't meet you with bread and with water¹⁰ in the way,
when you came forth out of Mitzrayim and because they hired against you Bila`am

¹⁰ Recall the words of Yeshua in Matthew 25: ***“Then he will say also to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you didn't give me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'” Then they will also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn't help you?’ “Then he will answer them, saying, 'Most assuredly I tell you, inasmuch as you didn't do it to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”***

the son of Be'or from Petor of Aram-Naharayim, to curse you.

[Deuteronomy 23:4]

Love your neighbor, and bless your enemy – but in the course of loving them and blessing them, never forget to *watch your back!*

A Message from Yeshayahu

In today's haftarah reading *Yeshayahu* [KJV 'Isaiah'] prophesies to the officials in charge of the cold-hearted, externals-focused, back-slidden leaders of Israel in his generation. Yeshayahu pulls no punches. He calls these leaders *rulers "of S'dom"* and *peoples "of G'morrah"*.

Hear the word of the Holy One, you rulers of S'dom!

Listen to the Torah of our God, you people of `Amorah!

"What are the multitude of your sacrifices to me?," says the Holy One.

"I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed animals.

I don't delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, Or of male goats.

When you come to appear before me,

Who has required this at your hand, to trample my courts?

Bring no more offerings that mean nothing to you.

Incense is an abomination to me;

New moons, Shabbatot, and convocations? I can't bear with self-obsessed assemblies!

My soul hates your New Moons and your appointed feasts;

They are a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread forth your hands [in a pretense of pious praise and/or prayer]

I will hide my eyes from you;

Yes, though you make many prayers, I will not listen or respond -

[Because] your hands are full of blood.

[Isaiah 1:10-15]

Hands full of blood. Let those words sink in on your heart. Did you know that even the Shabbat-observance of people with *hands full of blood* is offensive to the Holy One? Did you know that even the celebration of the *mo'edim* is sickening to the Holy One when the people celebrating them have *hands full of blood*. Ah, so we must ask with the Psalmist: *Who will ascend the Holy One's Holy Hill? Who may stand in His Holy Place?*

The Holy Place is not a place for men and women with hands full of blood. It is for he who has "clean hands, and a pure heart"¹¹. It is for he whose soul does not seek after the idols of his secular society. It is he who does not buy into the lies and flatteries and false prophesies broadcast by men to people with itching ears.

Alas, Yeshayahu is given eyes to see a horrible truth. This truth is that the people of the Holy One's covenant had in Isaiah's time for all practical purposes

¹¹ See Psalm 24:3-4.

abandoned the essence and spirit of the Holy One's Torah. They had begun living lives of *worldliness* and *materialism* instead – to the point where their lives and lifestyles in real time ceased to testify of a Glorious King and a Superior Kingdom, and actually became as bad as or worse than the depraved lifestyles of the people living in S'dom and G'morrah. While pretentiously making a show of observing the “letter” of the Torah they totally disregarded the “spirit” thereof.

The thoughts of the leadership of Israel in Yeshayahu's time had become *S'domite thoughts*. The leadership of Israel in Yeshayahu's time had taken on *S'domite mindsets*, *S'domite attitudes* and *S'domite values*. The speech and the conduct of the leaders of Yeshayahu's time - and of the people - more closely resembled the speech and conduct of S'domites than the *sh'ma* lifestyle the Holy One requires of His covenant People. Their religious observances had therefore degenerated to the point that they become, in the eyes of the Holy One, as nothing more than ‘filthy rags’.

The Filthy Rags We Wear

In the context that Yeshayahu is describing, efforts at observance of the *moed'im* and the making of *korbanot* through approach offerings were equivalent to a bride coming to the *chuppah* in filthy rags. They were not really observing the Torah – which must be done with all the heart, with all the soul and with all the strength. All they were really doing was playing an intellectual game of self-righteousness.

Following the letter of Torah is no more effectual to attain righteousness than attending religious services at a synagogue or church, or making donations to missions or charitable organizations, or reciting the so-called ‘Sinner's Prayer’. All such acts – if focused totally on the external, and not flowing out of a humble surrender of the heart and soul to the Holy One - constitute a sickening form of hypocrisy. The Holy One will tolerate a lot of things in the name of Covenant – but *He will not tolerate hypocrisy* - at least not for long. And for Israel in the time of Yeshayahu the proof was “in the pudding”. The leaders and the people of Israel, you see, looked, smelled, and acted like Sodomites, not like the Holy One's *am segulah*. While they continued the outward form of religious observance, and *honored Him with their lips*, their *hearts were far from the Holy One* and their *ways were far from His ways*. Since their hearts were far from Him He was not interested in – and could not stomach - their ritual sacrifices or their festivals. Not that the operative term was ‘theirs’. What they were observing were not HIS festivals. What they were doing at the altar was not approaching HIM as the Torah contemplated – they were doing THEIR thing. They had hi-jacked His Days and His protocols of approach for their own purposes. Thus even their observances on and pertaining to the Sabbath had become polluted with pagan influences.

The problem was not the *Sabbath* – which is, of course, always been and will always be holy, righteous, and good. The problem Yeshayahu was identifying was something else – *i.e.* the *misuse of the Sabbath* [and the *mo'edim*] by the compromised forms of religion that dominated the era. For a people caught upon in hypocrisy to flaunt the outward observance of the Holy One's Sabbath was the equivalent of a woman in the midst of an affair soaking her wedding ring in her illicit lover's cologne. It was making the Holy One's Wonderful Sabbath *a mockery* of what was intended.

Do Not Misinterpret the Holy One's Discipline of Those He Loves
As Abandonment By Him of the Covenant

Please note however that this does not in the least mean that the Holy One was discarding, or casting aside, the covenant of Torah, which specifically instructed the Redeemed Community of the Holy One to make *korbanot* [approach protocols designed to constitute a picture of substitutionary atonement], to remember and keep the seventh-day *Shabbat* holy, to gather and blow the *shofar* on each New Moon, and to celebrate the festivals specified in Leviticus 23. These mitzvot of Torah were after all not intended for the Holy One's benefit, but for the benefit of *His betrothed, Israel ... and* for a Witness to the *Goyim*! The idea was to build into the life of the Holy One's people *regular appointments with a beloved Divine Bridegroom, to foster regular remembrances of His past mercies, and to participate in regular prophetic rehearsals of His future, promised mercies.* In the midst of the people's joy and excitement in participating in these “divine dramas” recounting their Divine Bridegroom's goodness, they were to function as a kingdom of priests and a “light to the Nations”, proclaiming and testifying to the world of the Holy One's marvelous deliverance and provision.

There was never intended to be any moral or saving merit in mechanical observance of the ‘sacrifices’, the *Shabbatot* [Sabbaths], or the festivals themselves. If they were (or are) not labors of bridal love, issuing forth from hearts overflowing with hunger for and gratitude toward the Holy One and from souls filled with sincere repentance for sins committed and Torah instructions transgressed, they were (and are) an *abomination*.

What is the message for us today in Yeshayahu chapter 1? What prophetic call reaches across the centuries as we prepare for the ninth of Av and try to understand why we not only have no *beit Ha-Mikdash*, but are not even allowed – in the capital of our own nation - to pray on Mount Moriyah? I believe the message is that although the instructions of the Torah are eternal and unchanging, *our privilege to participate in them* is subject to indefinite suspension for disciplinary

reasons. *If*, that is, *our hands are full of blood*. Innocent blood. Blood spilled by sharp tongues. Blood spilled by the self-righteous slander and blood spilled by idle gossip. Blood spilled over trivial things, and blood spilled for bloodlust, and bloodlust alone. The blood of Hevel, slain by a jealous brother. Blood that cries out to the Holy One to be avenged.

You check your hands for any sign of such blood, Dear Reader, and I'll check mine.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Here are some basic questions from the text to get us started.

[A] To whose descendants does our text say that the Holy One had given the land of ***Seir*** [also known as Edom]? What family of giants had God driven out for those people?

[B] To whose descendants had He given *Moav* (Moab) [also known as Ar] and Ammon? What families of giants had God driven out for those peoples?

[C] Why were the Israelites instructed not to make war on, or occupy the land of, the *Edomi* [Edomites], *Moavi* [Moabites], and *Ammoni* [Ammonites]?

[D] What were the Israelites instructed not to do to the *Moavi* [Moabites]?

[E] What two things were the Israelites instructed not to do to the *Ammoni* [Ammonites]?

[F] What did the Holy One promise, in verse 25, to do *for* the Redeemed Community of Israel (and *to* “all the nations under heaven”) as soon as Israel, in faith and obedience to Divine Command, stepped across the Wadi Arnon into land controlled by the hostile forces of the *Emori* [Amorites]?

2. With regard to today's haftarah reading from Yeshayahu [Isaiah]:

[A] Why was it that the Holy One – though He had authored Leviticus 23 - did not *take pleasure* in the sacrifices, incense, New Moon celebrations, Sabbath observances, feast observances, and assemblies of the Israelites in the time of Isaiah 1?

[B] What did the Holy One say He would do (as long as the Israelites remained unrepentant) in response to the “many prayers” offered by Israel's leaders?

[C] What does the Holy One say filled the hands of the Israelite leaders? What do you think this means?

3. In today's reading from the apostolic writings, Shaul of Tarsus continues his description of the Divine gracing that the Holy One will place upon the life of a true ***episkopos***. He says:

[The *episkopos* therefore must be ...] not a drunkard,

not violent, not greedy for money,
but gentle- not quarrelsome, not covetous;
[1Timothy 3:3]

Note that Shaul indicates the Holy One will *remove certain things from*, and will *instill certain things in*, the life of an *episkopos*. This is in keeping with the meaning of the word *episkopos*. *Epi* is a Greek prefix meaning “superimposed upon”, or “within the target of”. *Skopos* is a Greek noun, which we have transliterated into English as “scope”. Hence, an epi-skopos is what is in the bullseye of the target, as viewed through a scope.

An *episkopos* is not a person holding a position, but a person who “hits within the bulls-eye of the Holy One’s target (the Torah lifestyle as lived by Yeshua)”, in the best spiritual eyes available to men. An *episkopos* is not sinless, because no man is sinless; however, he has, through years of walking with the Holy One, become more like Messiah than like the world. He is a *Tzaddik* (Hebrew name for one who walks in righteousness). He has put off certain worldly ways inconsistent with the nature of the Holy One, and has put on certain attributes of the Holy One inconsistent with the nature of the world.

Shaul is telling Timothy - don’t give honor to “titles” of men; check out their lifestyles - how they react to difficult circumstances and to provocation. The proof is in the pudding – not in the packaging!

[A] List the things Shaul says in verse 3 that the Holy One has *removed* from the life of a true *episkopos*.

[B] List the things that Shaul says in verse 3 that the Holy One has *instilled* in the life of an *episkopos*.

*May you know the covenant love of the Holy One and His Maschiach,
and may He transform you into an episkopos and a Tzaddik.
And may He be favorably inclined to your prayers.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’ Study

Lamentations 1:8-12

*Y’rushalayim has grievously sinned;
therefore she is become as a thing tamei [unclean];
All who once honored her now despise her because they have seen her nakedness:
Yes, she sighs, and turns backward. Her filthiness was in her skirts;
she didn't remember her latter end;
Therefore is she come down wonderfully; she has no comforter.
See, O HOLY ONE, my affliction; for the enemy has magnified himself.
The adversary has spread out his hand on all her pleasant things:*

*For she has seen that the nations are entered into her sanctuary,
concerning whom you did command that they should not enter into your assembly.*

*All her people sigh, they seek bread;
They have given their pleasant things for food to refresh the soul:
Look, O HOLY ONE, and see; for I am become abject.*

*Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look, and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow, which is brought on me,
With which the Holy One has afflicted [me]
in the day of his fierce anger.*