

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Devarim:*** **Deuteronomy 2:26 - 3:11**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 1:16-20**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Timothy 3:4-7**

Now begin to conquer and possess his land.

[Deuteronomy 2:31]

Today's Meditation is Lamentations 1:13-17;

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

Va'eshlach mal'achim – *And then I sent out messengers ...* ***mimidbar K'demot*** - *in the Wilderness of eastern [peoples] ...* ***el-Sichon melech Cheshbon*** - *to Sichon, king/warlord of Cheshbon ...* **Deuteronomy 2:26a.**

Moshe is taking us on a soaring excursion - a great odyssey of the heart that transcends time, space, and mortal consciousness. We are remembering things that did not even happen to us – but instead happened to our ancestors before we were born. It is as if they happened to us – and no later than yesterday. Moshe, you see, has found the secret of accessing the eternity that the Holy has set upon every human heart. See **Ecclesiastes 3:11b**. He has finally discovered the awakening, generation-transcending, power of Heaven-sourced *devarim*.

The first stop to which Moshe transported us in the course of his amazing time-travel odyssey was Horeb. The community of the redeemed left that rocky outcropping in the Wilderness of Sin almost forty years ago. Of all the myriads now camped on the High Plain of Moab overlooking Jericho, only four people - Kalev son of Yefunnah, Yehoshua son of Nun and Eleazar and Itamar, sons of Aharon – are old enough to remember what happened there. The rest of us were either not even born yet when our forefathers spent 11 ½ months there - or at best were too young to remember anything about the place. And yet, through the transcendent energy of Moshe's *devarim*, memories of things observed by angels and recorded in the Book of Life are now awakening in us as if we had personally been present and participating in real time.

First Moshe takes us to Horeb, Kadesh-Barnea; and Seir. Then he transports us in our minds – or is it our spirits - back to the valley of Zered, the river of Arnon, and the Emori outpost of Kedemot. Every time he mentions a place name a wave of memories flood over us. The memories are very, very real –but they are spiritual,

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not natural. Through Moshe's empowering words, our fathers' story is now becoming *our story* as well. No, we weren't physically present in flesh form at some of these stops; but yes, the eternal spirits within us were there. The high points of the story enthrall us; the low points make us weep. But remember, at the essential core of his being Moshe is not *a storyteller*; he is *a prophet*. And, after 80 years of walking with the Holy One, he has finally transformed from a *lo ish devarim* (i.e. not a man of soul stirring, atmosphere shifting, Divinely inspired and inspiring words) to the ultimate *ish devarim* (a man of soul stirring, atmosphere shifting, Divinely inspired and inspiring words) this side of Messiah.

What we thought was going to be a trip down memory lane, therefore, is beginning to feel more like a forward-looking journey up a prophetic ladder, rung by rung, generation by generation, all the way to the end of days. The prophet of the Exodus is presenting the *B'nei Yisrael* narrative in 'eyewitness testimony' style. He is recasting the storyline of the Torah in the first-person point of view and author-prevalent simple past-tense style. In the course of it all he is casting himself in the role of *tragic hero* - a likeable, well-meaning protagonist who reluctantly assumed the larger-than-life role for which he is destined, but who suffered from one deep-seated character flaw that kept resurfacing until it ultimately led to his undoing. He is not merely regaling us with reminiscences about the 'good old' days; he is trying to stir something deep within us. He is trying to awaken our awestruck hearts. He is trying to expand our perspective and vision. He is trying to build our *emunah* by reminding us of the challenges that we have - with the help of the Holy One, of course - faced and overcome in the course of our journey through the wilderness. The story Moshe is using his precious last few days on the planet to retell may seem to the casual reader like his *magnum opus*, but it is really *our story*, our ballad, our *love song*. It is our script, our screenplay, our opera, and our ballet. It frames our destiny. In every generation, you see, the Holy One causes this story to reproduce itself; and gives us relevance to the world by providing us a reason to live. The story Moshe is retelling is thus not only the story of our past, but also of our present and our future, all rolled into one.

So, let's catch up. Moshe is presently remembering all the mean-spirited, loud-mouthed, virulently anti-Semitic kings and warlords the Holy One arranged for us to meet along the way, as we were coming forth from the wilderness leaning on the arm of our beloved. He knows we will see the shadowy likenesses of these villains again in every age and generation - and that we absolutely must learn not to be intimidated by or overreact to them no matter how arrogantly they choose to present themselves.

Introducing Our Next Prototypical Antagonist – The Genocidal Anarchist Warlord Known to the Ancient World as ‘Sichon’

The next action sequence of Moshe’s great ballad centers around Sichon and Og. Sichon was a genocidal Emori warlord that our ancestors encountered in the region of Cheshbon, in the land of Moab. Og was his thug-like ally in the neighboring region of Bashan. Sichon was a very real historic figure of course; but that is not why his name made it into the Torah. His side-story is included in Torah because he is also the model for every narcissistic, opportunistic, anarchy-minded, manipulative, humanist hatemonger the world will ever know. He goes by many, many names. He comes in all socio-economic classes, every age group, and each gender and lifestyle model. He hijacks, and presumes to speak for, all ethnicities, all races, and all bloodlines. His dark energy infects and takes over all ideologies, all philosophies, and all movements. His arrogant anti-Semitism ultimately commandeers every political party, and every institution of government, entertainment, ‘news’, education, science, medicine, and organized religion. Of such a person the Psalmist said: ***My soul has dwelt too long with one who rejects shalom. I am all about shalom; but when I speak, he is for war!*** Psalm 120:6-7.

So, Dear Reader ... have you encountered anyone like *Sichon* – or his intimidating strongman/enforcer Og - lately? Have you looked the personification of arrogance, cruelty, and ethnicity-based hatred in the eye? Has an aggressive bully like Sichon or Og ever threatened you and yours with violent injury or death just because of his/her abject disdain for the bloodline from which you devolved? Have you ever had to listen to such a person’s racist rants, chants, and slogans? Have you ever been stalked, baited, harassed, oppressed, persecuted, or tormented by such a person? Has someone - or some unruly mob of thugs - to whom you have never caused harm or injury of any kind ever set out on a campaign to intimidate, then terrorize, then mock, then take up weapons against, brutalize, beat senseless, and crush the life out of you and/or members of your family? Has any person – or group of people – sought you out and made it clear to you that to them not only do the lives of ‘*your kind*’ not matter one whit, but your very existence on planet earth sickens and outrages them?

Careful now – this is a test. The Holy One allowed this – and intends to bring about good from it. But He wants to teach you something. He is testing you regarding how steadfast you are in the Covenant. How will you react? How will you respond? In whom and what will you trust? How, and according to whose counsel, will you deal with this? Will fear paralyze you? Will you let hate reduce you to the level of your oppressor? Will you repay evil for evil? Will you return insult for insult, slogan for slogan, rant for rant, blow for blow, and injury for injury? Will you sulk? Will you whine? Will you quit? Or will you be able to keep

your shalom, keep your joy, keep your testimony of the goodness of the Holy One and de-escalate, defuse, and transcend the situation? He wants to make you a battle-hardened soldier of the Kingdom. He wants to use this challenge to activate the calm, steady, overcoming son of the Covenant that He has been training you to become.

Gather Round and Listen, Dear Children: This is Our Story!

The words Moshe is speaking are not just momentous words for our ancestors – they are momentous words for *us*, for *our children*, and for *our children's children* as well. The *devarim* that Moshe is releasing are not just informative, inspirational, and motivational - they have the Creative Genius and Pulsing Energy of the Bridegroom-King's Empowering Breath in them. They are veritable *lightning bolts*. Empowered by the Holy One, Moshe's every word is penetrating our hearts and minds the way a knife cuts through butter. They are dividing that which is soulish in us from that which is spiritual. They are separating that which is bone in us from that which is marrow. The words Moshe is speaking on the Moavian Plain are strategically designed to take us to – and beyond – the threshold of spiritual growing pain. They are programmed to *cleanse and purify the human soul*. They are pregnant with life. They are *calling us to, and energizing us for, a deeper level of intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom than we have ever known*. They are *preparing us for the life-changing passage* that lies just ahead.

As a warning to the new generation against failing – as our fathers did - to trust the Holy One and *sh'ma* the Words of His Mouth, over the past few days Moshe has been reminding us of the remarkable chain of events and Divine Interventions through which the Holy One got us to where we are today. He is pouring out his wisdom for us like oil. In the last couple of aliyot Moshe has taken great pains to remind the younger generation of the Redeemed Community of the disastrous consequences their as a result of *choosing to fear and trust men instead of the Holy One* (i.e. *the sin of the spies*), and of *trying to make something happen outside of the Holy One's will and Divine timing* (i.e. *the presumptuous attack they mounted after being rebuked and disciplined by the Holy One for the sin of the spies*). Today Moshe will *change his focus* somewhat. Providing a stark contrast to the disasters we experienced when we *lo sh'ma*-ed the Holy One's directives at *Kadesh Barnea*, he will remind us of the joy and blessing which always comes when the Holy One's people *tune their ears to, prioritize, hear and obey* [Hebrew *sh'ma*] His Word and stay in the center of His Will. Moshe begins this section of the narrative with this reminder:

Va'eshlach mal'achim mimidbar K'demot
Then I sent messengers from the Wilderness of K'demot

el-Sichon melech Cheshbon divrei shalom
to Sichon, king of Cheshbon, with words of peace ...
[Deuteronomy 2:26]

After we learned to draw water from the earth by singing ‘*ali be'er enu-lah*’ – i.e. *spring up o well; respond to us!*’ [Numbers 21:17], the Holy One brought us into contact with two Amorite marauders who had, unknown to them, been storing up ‘*the wealth of the wicked*’ for us. In Numbers 21 we were told that Moshe reached out to the first of these pirates, Sichon, with an honorable, diplomatic approach. As we had learned to sing to the earth ‘*ali be'er enu-lah*’, and obtain its cooperation, so Moshe sought on our behalf to appeal to Sichon. He sent messengers to the warlord carrying *divrei shalom* – i.e. *radiating health, wellness, wholeness, peace, comfort, blessing, and goodwill*. He basically told Sichon: “*You will hardly know we were ever here. We will even pay you exorbitant amounts for food we do not eat and water we do not drink, because our God provides us all we need of both! Rak ebrah v’raglai* – [we want] *only to cross over on foot.*” Alas, it was to no avail. Neither Sichon nor the pirating cartels that he ruled with an iron fist wanted any part of *shalom* with the sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant. What they wanted was to *drive us into the sea*. They wanted to *rid the world of our kind*. Moshe knows we will face people – even whole nations – who share that attitude toward us. So, he spends more than a few moments in his glorious retrospective reminding us of how Sichon and his people responded to our *rak ebrah v’raglai* olive branch. They could have kept all their ill-gotten spoils – and even added to them - by accepting our generous offer. But they would not. In their bluster and their blind hate of us and the Covenant Partner we represent, they cut off their own nose to spite their face. They mustered for war and attacked us with everything they had. As Moshe poignantly reminds us:

Vayetze Sichon likrateinu hu v’chol-amorim l’milchamah Yahtzah
Then Sichon - he and all his people – drew near to attack us at Yahtzah.
[Deuteronomy 2:31]

Here is a lesson the prophetic *maestro* of *Sefer Devarim* wants us to learn, to learn well, and to always remember: the hearts of the Sichons and Emori of this world are always very, very hard toward us. But the Holy One always works that, too, into good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Understanding and Learning to Deal with Ragzu v’Chalu

We must always keep in mind that, as part of His Covenant with us, the Holy One has declared: ***Ha-amim tachat kol-ha-shamayim asher yishmei’un shim’acha v’ragzu v’chalu mipaneicha*** - *all the people groups under the heavens who hear about you will be alarmed, will tremble, and will be in a tizzy, because of you.* **Deuteronomy 2:25.** Do not be shocked when people of other cultures react negatively to you. Do not be hurt or offended when people outside the Covenant say all manner of false things about

you. Do not be outraged when people who live, breathe, eat, drink, and cohabit with *tumah* [i.e. uncleanness] conspire against, incite violence toward, and threaten – or even attempt- to drive you and your children into the Sea. Even if it looks, sounds, and smells like a hate/anti-Semitic reaction, it is, at its essence, just a *fear-based reaction*. People – and people groups – handle *ragzu v'chalu* – i.e. *the state of trepidation and extreme agitation that the Holy One promised to cause our proximity to generate in the people groups to whom we are called to model His more excellent way* – in different manners, of course. But most of those manners are, quite frankly not going to be particularly pleasant for our flesh! After all, all human beings – including us – are programmed by our Creator to respond to the emotion of fear with a variation of two methods – one is the *flight reflex*; the other is the *fight reflex*. If it is the *flight reflex* that kicks in, it means we become the subject of suspicion, paranoid delusion, rejection, ostracism, and slander/libel. If, on the other hand, it is the *fight reflex* that kicks in, it means that we and our children are about to face persecution, virulent attack, violent assault, isolated acts of terrorism, official, organized, and sponsored pogroms and intifadas – and military campaigns the intent of which is inflict holocaust.

Why do people who do not even know us react this way, you ask? It is because the Holy One has placed the state of *ragzu v'chalu* upon them – just as He said He would. It is all part of the plan. Our assignment, in each case, is to bring a *divrei shalom* – i.e. both a verbal and a lifestyle message of calmness, respect, gentleness, kindness, wholeness, wellness, health, healing, beauty, wisdom, fruitfulness and peace – to the people, nations, and cultures of the world. Our mission requires us to know *who we are*, and *why we are here*, and to understand that other nations have their own way of looking at and dealing with the world, and will not be comfortable at all with anyone who doesn't share that way. That means we must never make too big a deal of, or fan the flames of and thereby exacerbate, the quite normal and to be expected knee-jerk reactions of fear and hate, suspicion and rejection, flight and fight. If the people/nation/culture in question can overcome the normal human flight/fight reflexes and receive our *divrei shalom ... wonderful!* Then we can take some time and model for them the more excellent way of the Bridegroom-King, His Torah, His *Sabbaths*, and the Great Passion Play of Redemption and Restoration that is acted out each year through His *Mo'edim*. But if the people/nation/culture in question reject our *divrei shalom*, and yield to either their flight or fight reflex ... well, if that happens we just need to stay calm, understand they are just slaves to spirits of uncleanness, even as we were slaves to Pharaoh, and brace ourselves and our families for the inevitable panoply of Anti-Semitic behaviors. When the attack comes, we must react in reasonable, measured actions of self-defense – not rage, vengeance, or bloodlust. And we must resist the temptation to lower ourselves to their level of cruelty, and treat lightly of

disrespectfully the death of any human being – even an enemy who, reacting negatively and irresponsibly to *ragzu v'chalu*, was trying to kill us, torture our elderly, rape our wives and daughters, murder our babies, and drive us into the sea.

We should not be surprised, much less offended or outraged, by any reaction to our presence. In most instances, especially as tumah/uncleanness proliferates in the world around us, being immediately liked and wanted by the people, nations, and cultures of the world is simply not going to be in the cards for us. Chalk it up to *ragzu v'chalu*. And this, too, works for our good, because it makes sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we can never – for long - just blend in with or assimilate into the cultures around us, or let our *love-of-God-and-love-of-fellow-man salt* lose its savor, or let *the light that is generated when His Ruach ignites the kindling of Torah that is on deposit in us* ever go completely out. *Ragzu v'chalu* is, you see, designed to motivate *us* as much as, if not more than, it motivates those caught up in its throes.

Case in Point: Sichon and the Emori Cartels

Sichon and his people, who were the Emori occupying cartel's pirates and bullies who had taken over the Moavi territories around the ancient village of Cheshvan, responded to the state of *ragzu v'chalu* that our proximity generates with the prototypical *fight reflex*. They responded to our *divrei shalom* by immediately taking up arms and attacking us. That being their choice, the Holy One our God is going to make an example of them – and deliver them, and the very cities and fields they in their paranoia sought to protect from us, into our hands. **Deuteronomy 2:30**. The wealth of the wicked will become ours to steward in their place – when we did not even covet it.

Oh, Beloved! Whenever you hear the angry rhetoric of the peoples, nations, and cultures of the world, stay calm. When you see the Sichons and Emori of this world attacking, hold your shalom. In the famous words of Nachman of Breslev, *Kol ha-olam kulo gesher tzar me'od* [all of this phase of life is a journey across a very narrow bridge], *v'ha-ikar lo l'faheid k'lal* [and the essential thing is not to succumb to fear]. The bridge is narrow. The way is treacherous. The danger is real. But the key is not to be intimidated. In the valley of the shadow of death, the key is to let the Holy One's rod and staff comfort us – removing from us all fear of evil. We are not to panic. We are not to retreat. We are not to over-react. We are to defend our lives and our families as our King allows and directs, and make sure we do the minimum necessary to assure our survival, while maintaining our *shalom and our God-given predisposition to prefer mercy over judgment, and kindness over injury*. We are to trust the Holy One, and co-labor with Him to turn back their murderous attack. Just remember: *Rak ebrah v'raglai* – [we want] only to cross over on foot.

This is not *'us vs. them'*. *Survival* is essential; *vengeance and retribution*, on the other hand, are inconsistent with our calling, injurious to our relationship with the Creator, and counterproductive to our mission.

Who Is This Who Comes Forth to Drive us Into the Sea?

Sichon is, of course, a prophetic figure. We have not seen the last of him. He arises in every generation. And in every generation – until the final great conflict of Gog and Magog at least – his wrath increases, his rhetoric of hate escalates, and his attack broadens in scope. The original *Sichon* was an *Emori* [Amorite] – a *universalist*, a *globalist*, a *citizen of the world*. He was building a 'new world order' kind of kingdom. He and his army had invaded and taken over the land the Holy One had given to Lot's descendants, the Moavi, decades prior. *Sichon's* method of choice was – and always will be – intimidation. He and his minions had successfully employed tactics of intimidation on the mild-tempered Moavi, and had thereby taken control of and set up bases of military operation in a significant portion of the lands the Holy One had set aside for Lot's descendants. *Sichon* himself had established a petty little kingdom there, centered in a fortress he called *Cheshbon* - meaning 'accounting' or 'reckoning'. So when the Betrothed Bride-People of our story came up from the Wilderness leaning on the arm of their Beloved, *Sichon* and his highly trained army of terrorists were standing squarely in the way between us and the bridal chamber the Holy One had prepared for us.

All we wanted was to pass through the territory *Sichon* controlled, and the *Emori* illegally occupied, without being harassed and molested. ***Rak ebrah v'raglai***. But every bit as much as we wanted to pass through and move on to the homeland prepared for us, he and his people wanted someone new to *despise*, *demonize*, *terrorize*, and *intimidate*. *Sichon* was not about to just step aside and let us through. If the *Emori* of this world cannot intimidate you, they will attack you with everything they have. *Divrei shalom* [*i.e.* words of peace]? Some people in this world have no comprehension of – much less the slightest bit of interest in - *divrei shalom*. They thrive on conflict. They delight in drama. The Holy One knows we are going to come face-to-face with such people in every generation. Indeed, our repeating encounters with such people in each generation are an essential part of His glorious plan for the redemption of not only mankind but Creation. We just need to understand who these people are, why they think the things they think and do the things they do, and how we are to respond to them. This too is for good for those who love the Bridegroom-King, and who are called according to His Purpose.

The prophetic figure *Sichon*, along with his *Emori* contemporaries, were not destined to remain our neighbors for long. Unbeknown to us, their cruelty and perversion were already under the final judgment of the Holy One before we ever

arrived. He brought us into contact with them knowing full well they would attack us and try to drive us into the sea. He choreographed the whole thing. It is part of the Divine Symphony of Redemption for the World.

Why Do The Peoples of the Earth Seem to Hate Us So?

But it was not the historical ‘Amorites’ of that day that led the Holy One to address our interactions with them in such a significant number of verses spread over two separate books of Torah. The ‘Amorites’ of yesteryear are long gone; but the Holy One knows that the people of the one-world order, humanistic prototype the ancient Emori represent are *with us still* – and indeed, will remain with us till the end of the age. Let’s consider why.

The Hebrew word that our English Bibles translate as *Amorites* is *Emori*². People by that name are first mentioned in Torah in Genesis 10. There we are told:

*Kana`an became the father of Tzidon (his firstborn), Het, the Yevusi, the **Emori**, the Girgashi, the Hivvi, the `Arki, the Sini, the Arvadi, the Tzemari, and the Hamati. Afterward the families of the Kena`anim were spread abroad.*

[Genesis 10:15-18]

Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov were all descendants of Noach’s son Shem. The Emori are descendants of Noach’s son Cham and nephew Kena’an. We - descendants of Shem - live under the blessing *Noach* spoke over Shem. ***And he said: Blessed [be] the Holy One, the God of Shem - and may Kena’an be his servant. Genesis 9:26.*** The Emori on the other hand are under the ‘curse’ Noach spoke over Kena’an. For then he [Noach] said: ***“Cursed [be] Kena’an; a servant of servants He shall be to his brethren.” Genesis 9:25.***

The name Torah gives these people is based upon the Hebrew verb root *amar*, which means *to speak*. These people were *talkers*: *Big talkers*; *Trash talkers*; *Self-Promotion Talkers*; *Ideology Talkers*; and negative-energy spreaders. Like any self-obsessed celebrity, politician, athlete, university professor, ‘news’ broadcaster, or media personality who is given a few moments in front of a microphone today, they will say – and/or do symbolically - virtually anything to get attention and/or a shock/sentiment reaction. They will spew negativity for a base or for a ‘buck’, for a rating or for an award, for a poll result or for a vote, for a sadistic chuckle at a friend’s expense or for a perceived enemy’s public humiliation, for a moment in the spotlight, for a cover-up of their own mistakes or deceptions, or, of course, for a feeling of self-importance. Their modus operandi involves drinking deep and often from what I have come to call the ‘two-bit lashon ha-ra brew of demagogues. That witches’ brew consists of combinations of the following:

- *disinformation*

² *Emori* is *alef, mem, resh, yod*. Strong’s Hebrew word #567, it is pronounced *em-o-ree’*.

- *misinformation,*
- *spin-doctoring,*
- *fact-twisting,*
- *number/statistic manipulating,*
- *history-rewriting,*
- *opinion-shaping,*
- *gossip-mongering,*
- *drama-creating,*
- *mudslinging,*
- *hatemongering,*
- *fearmongering,*
- *faux crisis manufacturing and exploitation;*
- *race-baiting,*
- *class-envy inciting;*
- *perversion promoting,*
- *profane ranting,*
- *emotion and sentiment manipulating,*
- *derogatory-name calling and shame-labeling,*
- *inflammatory blame-throwing,*
- *division-sowing,*
- *politically correct/culturally accepted forms of bullying;*
- *violent-protesting, and*
- *Riot planning, funding, and organizing.*

That is quite a list, isn't it? And it is by no means exhaustive. If the human tongue can be used to cause chaos, havoc, outrage, and paranoia, the Emori will always find a way. And, unfortunately, as unpleasant and destructive as all the negative 'talking points' of the Emori of the world are, there is a threat they represent that can be even more serious and deadly for us. They will - if we continue to stay on their radar once they start hating on us - eventually graduate from *negative speech making about us* to *negative actions toward us*. Once they are whipped into a frenzy by their demagogues, you see, the Emori tend to morph into *doers* as well as talkers. *Evildoers*, that is. Masquerading as do-gooders, they tend mount up and ride forth shouting, in harmony with old clever-in-his-own-eyes Gaston, one version or other of 'the Mob Song' – commonly known as '*Kill the Beast*'³. Get used to that song – and that sentiment, Beloved. Learn not to panic, get incensed, sulk, or over-react. We know what the script says about how the 'Kill the Beast' movements of the Emori are destined to turn out, don't we?

³ The reference is to the play and the Disney movie adaptation of '*Beauty and the Beast*' - copyright Disney Studios,1991.

The Emori were, after all, the builders of the ancient city of Bavel. Sometimes they are even referred to in historical accounts as the *'Old Babylonians'*. By the time our ancestors encountered the Emori in the land East of the Yarden River the people known as Emori were unlike any of the other peoples we have seen since we left Egypt. They were no longer a clan lineally descended from a common ancestor as had been the Midyani, the Edomi, the Moavi, or the Ammoni. They were now *a diverse mixture of peoples from many backgrounds*. The Emori about which we read in the Torah were multi-national, multi-cultural. They were the 'universalists' and 'one-world order' proponents of the day. Emori were 'citizens of planet earth', not of any country. They were the ancient practitioners of the 'one world order' philosophy of social interaction. That means they are, in their minds, free to hate and seek to destroy everyone who is not like them.

Such a people will always be at odds with the Holy One's 'holy nation' of *k'doshim*. Such a people will never take our *divrei shalom* [words of peace] as anything but *a sign of weakness, an indication of our inferiority* to them, and an *invitation to plot ways to drive us into the sea*. When Avram sojourned in the Land and dwelt in the 'plain of Mamre' near Hebron he *dwelt alongside* the Emori. See **Genesis 14:13**. That is about as good as the relationship is ever going to get. Like oil and water we co-exist with the Emori on this planet - but we most definitely *do not mix well*.

The Violent Clash of Worldviews

To a universalist 'new world order' people such as the Emori, you see, any nation who stands alone and lives apart from the rest of society is a threat which absolutely must be eradicated. Add to the fact that we dare '*stand alone and live apart*' the radical idea that lies at the heart of who we are – *i.e.* that there is a God Who expects all people to live beautiful, kind, loving, and wise lives in accordance with a prescribed code of beneficial and responsible conduct [the Torah] - and we not only *repulse* such people, we are actually seen by them as a threat to their world view that must be stamped out. They see us as the fomenters of a '*vast right-wing conspiracy*'. They believe that the only values that matter in society are their version of '*tolerance*', '*diversity*', and '*freedom of speech*' – as they radically choose to redefine those terms for their own convenience, in support of their perverse, hate-filled agendas. It should come as no surprise that their definition of 'tolerance' and 'diversity' never includes us. Absolutely anyone who will not melt into such peoples' universalist idea of mixture – *i.e.* who will not bow to their false gods and celebrate their uncleanness and perversions - simply must, in their view, be *destroyed* – driven, as it were, into the Sea. Isn't that interesting. Tolerance and diversity indeed.

It is time we learned a great truth of history. Here is that truth: *we will never, for very long at all, be able to live in peace with 'tolerance and 'diversity' ideologues any more than we will be able to live in peace with the 'pure stock of the Aryan Race' people.* Oh, it is not that *we will attack them.* We do not have to. *They attack us.* They ALWAYS attack us. They thrive on hating us, blaming us, and attacking us. They will *never, ever, ever, stop attacking us.* If they cannot attack us *physically* they attack us *verbally*, with barrages of *accusations* and *propaganda.* They *teach their children that we are subhuman.* They are, you see, absolutely *obsessed with us.* They see us as the epitome of everything evil in the world. As long as we exist, they feel compelled to *blame us for all problems,* paint us as *the scapegoat for all blunders,* and *convince themselves and anyone who will listen to them that our annihilation is the answer to every ill.* They will, therefore, never, never, never give peace with us so much as a *thought* - much less a chance. Hence, Moshe describes the response of the Emori to our ***divrei shalom*** as follows:

V'lo avah Sichon melech Cheshbon ha-avireinu bo ki-hikshah

But Sichon, King of Cheshbon, would not let us pass through his land.

Adonai Eloheicha et-rucho v'imetz et-levavo

The Holy One had hardened his spirit and made his heart firm,

l'ma'an tito v'yadeicha k'yom hazeh

so that He could give [his land] over to our hands, as it is today.

The Holy One, as we learned earlier in the week, is content to let us have as neighbors certain peoples who do not particularly *like us* - people like the Moavi, the Ammoni, and the Edomi. From time to time we will have conflict with such peoples, of course, *but by and large we can co-exist with such peoples, engage in trade with such peoples, and get along pretty well with such peoples ... as long as we stay where they feel we belong and keep a safe distance from them.* The Emori of this world, however, are a *whole different story.* What the Holy One is not willing to subject us to is one-world-order types like the Emori who are absolutely bent on our *total destruction.* Our *existence as a nation,* our *separateness from other peoples,* and our *unique nationhood,* you see, are all integral components of the plan of the Holy One for the redemption of the World. The Emori of this world *cannot and will not* accept that. Emori are therefore not just our enemies – *they are the enemies of the Holy One.* We must *love them.* We must *bless them.* But we must never let them either intimidate us or stop us from being who we are called to be, from doing what we are called to do, or from going where our Bridegroom calls us to go. We are to always offer the Emori we meet along our way *divrei shalom.* But what they choose to say and do in response to our ***rak ebrah v'raglai*** declaration will determine their fate, not ours.

The First War Prophetic of the End-Times: The Rout of Sichon

Moshe's prophetic retrospective then proceeds to recall how the Holy One intervened on behalf of His Covenant People and His Redemptive Plan for Mankind and caused the entire kingdom of the Emori warlord⁴ to be delivered into their hand. Moshe says:

*Sichon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at **Yachatz**⁵.*

*The Holy One our God delivered⁶ him up before us;
and we struck him, and his sons, and all his people.*

*We took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed every inhabited city,
with the women and the little ones; we left none remaining:
only the cattle we took for a prey to ourselves,
with the spoil of the cities which we had taken.*

*From `Aro`er, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon,
and [from] the city that is in the valley, even to Gil`ad, there was not a city too high for us;
the Holy One our God delivered up all before us.*

[Deuteronomy 2:32-36]

What Moshe described sounds a lot like the “*six-day war*” of 1967. In neither case did the Covenant People of the Holy One go out looking for a fight. In both cases, the enemy *attacked us* with arrogance and vengeance. And yet in both instances at the end of the battle, when the smoke cleared, somehow we controlled the very land from which they staged their attack on us, and instead of us being destroyed, we suddenly awoke to find we had been given the power – through the enabling of the Holy One – to displace their culture of hate. That is how the ‘Kill the Beast’ movements always turn out – if we just stay focused on our mission, trust the Holy One’s rod and staff, and go only where He leads us.

With the removal of Sichon and his angry band of Cheshvanian antagonists from the landscape, the initial “down payment” on Eretz Yisrael was thus delivered. The destruction of Sichon’s army was the “first witness” of our Divine Bridegroom’s promise to deliver possession of Eretz Yisrael to us. And the “second witness”, as we will see, was not far behind.

⁴ Torah’s original telling of this story is found in Numbers 21. Moshe retells the story in today’s text, to put the events in proper historic and spiritual context. Before he gives his final exhortations to Israel/us, he wants them/us to understand how the Holy One has brought them to the place they/we now stand.

⁵ *Yachatz* is Strong’s Hebrew word #3096 *yod, hey, tzade sofit*, pronounced *yah'-hawtz*. This is an ancient verb root, meaning ‘*He stomps, or He crushes under His feet*’.

⁶ The word our English Bibles translate as “delivered” is *natan*, Strong’s Hebrew word #5414, *nun, tav, nun sofit*, pronounced *naw-tan*!. The English proper name “Nathan” comes from this Hebrew word. The prophet who counseled David was not called “Nathan”, but *Natan*. This ancient verb root means “*He gives as an inheritance forever*.”

The Sequel to the First Prophetic War: The Victory Over Og

Moshe continues his prophetic retrospective with the story of how the Holy One next delivered Og - the other Emori warlord in the area - and his entire 60-city dominion known as *Bashan*, over to the Redeemed Community as well. Again, we did not attack them; they attacked us. As Torah records it:

... then `Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei⁷.

*The Holy One said to me, “**Do not fear him; for I have delivered him, and all his people, and his land, into your hand; and you are to do to him as you did to Sichon king of the Emori, who lived at Cheshbon.**”*

So the Holy One our God delivered into our hand `Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we struck him until none was left to him remaining.

[Deuteronomy 3:1-3]

The “second witness” has testified. In the Holy One’s eyes - and in our own - the thing is established. He has *delivered* – *natan*, meaning to give as in a stewardship trust forever – the nations into our hand. And He will do it again, in the latter-time of days.

You Do Realize That it Isn’t Primarily the IDF, the IAF, the Mossad, or our American Allies, Don’t You?

While Moshe retells the stories of our clashes with the Emori *with prophetic relish* he does so *without an ounce of personal or national pride*. He knows – and wants to make sure we and all the world knows - that *no man or army won these battles*. He wants us to know that *no human strategist planned them*. It was not that B’nei Yisrael was a superior force or had superior arms or strategy or intelligence - military or otherwise. None of those things was the reason B’nei Yisrael was able to successfully repel the vicious Emori attacks. So what then was – and what will always be - the key to the victories over new world order types like Sichon, Og, and their ilk? Moshe made very clear the source of and reason for these victories: ***The Holy One our God delivered him over to us*** Deuteronomy 2:33. As I explained above, the Emori are not just our enemies – *they are the Holy One’s enemies*. The Emori – and all those in every generation who choose to adopt the worldview and mindset of the *Emori* - only hate *us* because they hate *Him*. As for us however, experiencing a foretaste of the joy and blessing of life in the Holy One’s Will was perhaps the best preparation possible for those *Y’hoshua* [Joshua] would lead into Kena’an. “*Taste and see that the Holy One is good*”, the Psalmist said. Taste indeed!

⁷ *Edre’i* is Strong’s Hebrew word #154, *alef, dalet, resh, ayin, yod*, pronounced *ed-reh’-ee*. Strong’s will tell you it is usually translated “goodly pasture”, but it literally means “My force”. See the root word, Strong’s Hebrew word #153, *edra*, meaning “*force, power, strength*”. Adding the *yod* to the end of a word, in Hebrew [hence, *edre’i* makes the word first person possessive]. See also the usage of the verb root in Ezra 4:23.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Get out your Bible Atlas. Draw a map of the land East of the Jordan River showing the following:

- (a) the land of Sichon [the King of Cheshbon];
- (b) Yachatz [KJV, Jahaz];
- (c) Aroer;
- (d) the River Arnon;
- (e) Gilead,
- (f) the River Yabbok [Jabbok];
- (g) the land of Og [the King of Bashan]; and
- (h) Edrei.

2. Why does the Scripture say that Sichon, King of the Emori [Amorites], refused to let the Israelites pass through his land? Give your answer and tell from what verse[s] you got your answer.

3. Where did the big battle with Sichon's army take place? What does the name of that place mean?

4. Where did the big battle with Og's army take place? What does the name of that place mean?

5. In today's reading from the prescribed haftarah, Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] tells the backslidden leaders of His people, whose ways He saw as *indistinguishable from the ways of Sodomites*, certain things that were necessary for them to do [not just *believe* or *confess*] before the Holy One would take pleasure in their religious activities *or even hear their prayers*.

Some Hebrew sages have counted 9 distinct instructions for *t'shuvah* in this passage; others find 10. Whatever the number, the message is clear: Without *t'shuvah* [returning to our Divine Bridegroom and the Bride-in-waiting lifestyle of Torah through genuine repentance and rededication] we cannot be restored. Here is how Yeshayahu puts it:

Rachatzu chizaku

Wash yourselves; make yourself clean.

hasiru roa ma'alelechem mineged eynai

Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes;

chidlu harea

Stop doing ra.

Limdu heytev

Learn to make/build/do/bring forth tov.

dirshu mishpat

Seek the Holy One's will, ways, and results.

ashru chamotz

Relieve the oppressed.

shiftu yatom

Bring that which Heaven decrees for healing to the fatherless,

rivu almanah

Plead/contend for/on behalf of the widow."

Lechu-na v'nivachechah yomar Adonai

"Come now, and let us go to the place of discipline together," says the Holy One:

im-yiheiyu chata'eychem k'shanim

"Though your failures to abide in and by Torah be as a scarlet letter for you,

k'sheleg yalbinu

they can/will be made as white as snow.

im-yadimu chatola yalbinu k'tzemer yiheiyu

Though they be red like crimson, they can/will be made as wool.

Im-tovu ush'matem tuv ha-aretz tocheilu

If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land;

V'im-tema'anu umeritem cherev te'uklu

But if you refuse and rebel, you will be food for the sword;

ki pi Adonai diber

For the mouth of the Holy One has spoken it."

[Isaiah 1:16-20]

[A] Read Matthew 3:7-10 and write an essay on *what our Covenant Partner in Heaven considers true "repentance"*. In that essay define "repentance" in your own words. Explain how you have "repented" over something recently. Be sure to include a description of the Hebraic word picture you see in the Hebrew word *t'shuvah*.

[B] List all the things Yesha'yahu called upon the leaders of Israel to do (verses 16-17). With regard to each of the things you have listed, give at least one practical, real-life example of how you could do the very thing the Holy One instructed be done.

[C] Verse 18 contains one of the most often-repeated invitations in the Bible. What do you think it means to '*reason together*' with the Holy One? [Hint, look up the Hebrew word *yakah* in Strong's Concordance (Hebrew word #3198) and in Gesenius.]

[D] What does the Holy One say will be the reward of those who "are willing and obedient"?

[E] What does the Holy One say will be the end for those who "resist and rebel"?

[F] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words our English Bibles translate as "willing", "obedient", "resist", and "rebel". Write each of these Hebrew words in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings, and as each is transliterated into English. Then, with regard to each word, describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing as you research the verb root forms.

6. In today's reading from the apostolic writings Shaul of Tarsus concludes his words to a *talmid* named Timothy about the type of gracing which the Holy One puts on the life of one who He has set aside to function as a true Biblical *episkopos*.

The *episkopos* [i.e. a Divinely visited and appointed one for a city] *therefore must be ...*

... one who rules his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence;
(for if a man doesn't know how to rule his own house,
how will he take care of the called-out ones of God?)
not a new convert, lest being puffed up he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.
Moreover he must have good testimony from those who are outside,
to avoid falling into reproach and the snare of the adversary."
[1 Timothy 3:4-7]

[A] What do you think it means for a man to "rule his own house well" [1 Timothy 3:4-5]?

[B] What do you think it means for a child [or children] to be "in subjection" to their father?

[C] What do you think it means for a child to relate to his or her father "with all reverence" [KJV says "with proper respect"]?

[D] Define the word "novice" [the version above translates the word as "convert"]. Use both a dictionary definition and a definition from Strong's [Greek word #s 3501 and 3504];

[E] What is the Greek word? What Hebrew word would most likely be substituted for that Greek word?

[F] What bad things can happen if a "novice" is mistaken for an *episkopos* [if people flock around such a person for advice, counsel, and instruction in the ways of the Holy One]?

[G] What bad things can happen if someone who is not respected in the community [doesn't pay debts or honor his word, for instance] is mistaken for an *episkopos*?

[H] What is "reproach", as used in the final verse of today's aliyah?

[I] What is "the snare of the devil" as used in the final verse of today's aliyah?

[J] Compose a *blessing* to say over your brothers, sisters, and friends [or, if you are married, your spouse and children, siblings, and friends], asking that the Holy One make the person you are blessing to fulfill all the qualifications of a true Biblical *episkope*. Here, I'll start you off:

*“Blessed are You, O Holy One our God. May you bless _____,
and empower him (or her) to be BLAMELESS BEFORE YOU,
to be (or, for an unmarried person, become) A FAITHFUL HUSBAND
(or, if a female, A FAITHFUL WIFE). May You enable him/her to be VIGILANT, and SOBER,
and direct him/her in how You desire him/her to walk out Your MITZVOT,
so that all may see his/her good behavior and give glory and honor to You*

NOW, YOU FINISH COMPOSING THE BLESSING, USING I TIMOTHY 3:2-7
AS A GUIDE. And say this blessing over someone this *Erev Shabbat*.

*May you experience today a foretaste of the goodness of the Holy One;
... and may you become hopelessly addicted to it!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Lamentations 1:13-17

*From on high has he sent fire into my bones,
and it prevails against them;
He has spread a net for my feet, He has turned me back:
He has made me desolate and faint all day.
The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hand;
They are knit together. They are come up on my neck;
He has made my strength to fail:
The Holy One has delivered me
into their hands, against whom I am not able to stand.
The Holy One has set at nothing all my mighty men in the midst of me;
He has called a solemn assembly against me
to crush my young men:
The Holy One has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Y'hudah.
For these things I weep;
my eye, my eye runs down with water;
Because the comforter who should refresh my soul is far from me:
My children are desolate, because the enemy has prevailed.
Tziyon spreads forth her hands; there is none to comfort her;
The Holy One has commanded concerning Ya`akov,
that those who are round about him should be his adversaries:
Y'rushalayim is among them as a thing **tamei**.*