

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

REAIINGS: **Torah Devarim:** **Deuteronomy 1:1-32**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 1:1-6**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Timothy 3:1**

*May the Holy One, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times
an bless you as He has promised!*

[Deuteronomy 1:11]

Today's Meditation is Lamentations 1:1-4;

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

Eleh ha-devarim asher diber Moshe el-kol-Yisra'el - These are the substantive things/weighty words that Moshe spoke unto all Israel **Deuteronomy 1:1a.**

The Ultimate Romance – *i.e.* the “*I-Will-Be-Your-God-and-You-Will-Be-My-People*’ relationship between *the Creator of the Universe* and *B'nei Yisrael* - is about to enter a glorious new phase. The generation of Avraham's seed that the Holy One is bringing forth to partner with Him in His Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan has now acquired a significant amount of seasoning – and quite a bit of precious history of dealings with the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven - to go along with its youthful passion. The names and faces of the human participants in the Great Romance have changed many times since the call of Avraham; but the deep, all-consuming love affair *between God and all mankind*, on the one hand, and between *a firstfruits remnant of mankind and God*, on the other, is still very much alive. The Bride-nation is about to *cross a great threshold* - the Jordan River - and start to *build a forever home*. At the sight of the Bridal chamber just across the Jordan a *Holy fire* has begun to burn brightly in this nation's eyes just as it burned in Avraham's. A *Holy hunger* has begun to churn in this nation's bellies just as it churned in Yitzchak's, Ya'akov's, and Yosef's. The time of fearing giants is over. No sense of overwhelm at the greatness of our calling will deter us now. There will be no more turning away in shame, no more refusal to take possession of what the Bridegroom offers, no more whining, and no more rebellion – *isn't that right, Moshe?* Ah, but Moshe might have smiled and said: *'Well ... it's not quite that simple, Dear ones. So ... can we talk?'*

Moshe Wants a Heart-to-Heart

The 40th year following the Exodus is drawing to a close. As the new moon signals the beginning of the 11th month of that critical year, all presently *appears* quiet and peaceful in the Camp of the Redeemed. Emori armies threaten us no more.

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Bila'am's voice has fallen silent. The Midyani/Moavi Conspiracy has run its course. Those involved in that conspiracy are chagrined to see that they have hit us with their best shot - and though we staggered a bit out of the box, we are not only still here, but have emerged from the confrontations stronger than ever.

Nothing of any significance *seems* to be happening on the plains overlooking the Jordan. Herds and flocks graze contentedly all the way from the Arnon River to the Brook *Yabbok*. But Moshe knows that the current season of serenity is not going to – is not even supposed to - last. He knows a *major shift in the spiritual atmosphere* of the earth is in the wind. He knows that the Holy One is even now working behind the scenes, stirring up the nest of His Redeemed, getting ready to bring something glorious and world changing to pass. A prophet to the end, he senses in his 120-year-old bones that *things on planet earth are about to change very, very dramatically*. He knows that Heaven is going to invade earth – through the conduit of the very real people he has so diligently midwived and wet-nursed over the past four decades. And he knows that as both *friend of the Bridegroom* and *spiritual father to the nation* it is his honor to release the final prophetic empowerments through which those people will be prepared for the amazing times they are about to experience and the amazing challenges that are about to be set in motion from on High.

Let the Final Preparations for a New Prophetic Season Begin!

The word spread through the camp quickly. Moshe, the aging prophet of the Exodus, wants *a meeting* - with every man, woman, and child in the camp of the Redeemed. And he wants that meeting ***now!***

The elders of the various tribes made the trek to the Tent of Meeting first. Yehoshua nudged Kalev as the two elder statesmen walked together toward the Tent of Meeting where Moshe awaits. “*What do you think is going on with the old graybeard now? What is he, 120 years old or so?*” Kalev replied in a whisper: “*Yeah, he's been around ever since I can remember. Even so, he hasn't lost a step as far as I can tell. And have you looked at the expression on his face lately? It has been a long, long time since I saw him with that much fire in his eyes. You remember what it was like when he use to stand in front of Pharaoh, don't you?*”

Yehoshua nodded. “*Oh yes, I remember. And I haven't seen him this focused since he came down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone in his hand and his face glowing like the sunrise!*” Kalev smiled. “*He looks like a goatskin full of water, ready to explode an gush forth*”. Yehoshua winked. “*Like the Rock at Horeb – eh?*” Kalev chuckled. “*Sweetest water I ever tasted came from that Rock! Sure could use a dipper or two of that nectar from Heaven right about now!*”

The two paused a moment as they approached the *Mish'kan's* embroidered linen entrance. Behind them they saw a virtual sea of young men – all a full generation younger than themselves, and two generations younger than Moshe – coming from all corners of the camp. “These are *elders*?” They thought to themselves. Kalev looked at Yehoshua and sighed. “*It’s a new day, my old friend*”, he whispered. Yehoshua nodded. “*That it is, Kalev!*” And as the two eldest of the elders of Israel approached their assigned places at Moshe’s right hand, Yehoshua turned to Kalev and whispered: “*But even so, I must confess that every time the old graybeard calls us to assembly I still get as nervous as a kid on his first day in Hebrew school.*”

It is time. Moshe is standing before us, face beaming, eyes dancing, and smiling from ear to ear. Let these meetings – and the season of final preparations for our grand and glorious destiny – BEGIN! He who has an ear to *sh'ma* - let him *sh'ma!*

These Are the Words ...

The Hebrew name of the book English-speakers have come to know as Deuteronomy is *devarim*. This book - the last of the five books of the Torah - starts with this simple introduction:

Eleh ha-devarim

These are the words/energizing buzzwords

asher diber Moshe el-kol-Yisra'el

that Moshe spoke to all Israel ...

[Deuteronomy 1:1]

The final book of Torah is composed of a group of divinely inspired speeches or exhortations [*devarim*] given by Moshe to the generation who would enter into Eretz Yisrael under Yehoshua [Joshua]. What was it Moshe said? Torah describes it as follows:

... K'chol asher tzivah Adonai oto alehem

... all that the Holy One directed him to say to them.

A Fire Burning in Moshe's Bones

The speeches of *Sefer Devarim* constitute the parting instructions of Moshe to the Community of the Redeemed – the children of those who had, so long ago it seems, followed him out of Egypt. These speeches represent Moshe’s pronouncement of what he had learned in the course of his amazing life about the Holy One, His Will, and His Ways from speaking with Him face-to-face as a man speaks to a friend. To study these words, of this man, is virtually to ascend the mountain with Him and see the glory of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya’akov. He said to the Holy

One: “teach me your Ways”². The Holy One is just that. Those ways *do not change*. An while it is true that, as is so often proclaimed in religious circles today, “*Moshe, my servant is dead*”; it is also true that the revelation given to us through Moshe’s many encounters with the Holy One lives on, dramatically affecting every aspect of our lives. So let’s see what Moshe has to say!

Moshe knew – because the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya’akov had *told him* – that he would not be the one to physically lead the People into Eretz Yisrael. The son of Amram and Yocheved knew that death would claim him long before the crossing of the Yarden [Jordan] was to occur. And yet, Moshe had such a deposit of the Holy One in him that he could not “*go gentle into that good night*”. The words of the Creator of the Universe *burned within his breast, and cried out to be released* over the lives of the people of the living God. They awaited only *a time and a place*.

The Time

The text tells us when Moshe began to release these speeches.

Vayehi b'arba'im shanah

It was in the fortieth year,

b'ashtei-asar chodesh

in the eleventh moon cycle,

b'echad l'chodesh

on the first day ...

[Deuteronomy 1:3]

Historians tell us that the most likely date for the beginning of these messages of Moshe was the first day of the 11th Biblical month in year 2488 from Creation. That would make the date *January 18, 1273 b.c.e.* Whether the year the historians suggest is correct or not, one thing was certain: it had been just short – by ten weeks – of 40 years since that fateful 14 Nisan when the death angel struck Egypt and Pharaoh in tormented rage ordered Moshe and his band of slaves out of Egypt.

Much had happened since then. Moshe’s brother Aharon, his sister Miryam, his nephews Nadav and Avihu, his kinsman Korach, and over 600,000 other men who followed him out of Egypt now lie silent in the dust of the desert. **A new generation surrounds Moshe. Their time – their chance to make *tikkun*³ for their fathers’ sin at Kadesh Barnea – is at hand.** In just a few short months Elazar

² Exodus 33:13.

³ *Tikkun* is a Hebrew word [*tav, yod, kuf, vav, nun sofit*] meaning “to repair”, or “to fix” something. It means, in context, to contribute the human effort and will necessary to fulfill a Divine plan that another generation neglected or refused to fulfill. It thus means to “fill up the breach” in the spiritual condition of one’s family or nation.

the *kohen gadol* will step into the waters of the Yarden at Yehoshua's command – and at long last the glorious return of Avraham's descendants to the Land and the Destiny the Holy One promised will start to unfold in fact instead of just in theory.

The Place

The *time*, of course, dictated the *place*. As mentioned above, the land of Israel lies just over the Jordan. The camp of the Holy One's Redeemed multitude is on the 'plain of Moav' – the coastal lowlands just East of the Yarden, from which the towering mountains of modern-day Jordan [i.e. ancient Moab and Ammon] rise. Here is how our text describes the setting of Moshe's final exhortations:

b'ever ha-Yarden b'midbar b'Aravah

on the east bank of the Jordan, in the wilderness, on the plain . . .

B'ever ha-Yarden

on the east bank of the Jordan

b'eretz Mo'av

in the land of Moab

[Deuteronomy 1:1(a),5]

So on the plain of Moab, in the shadow of Mt. Nebo where he would very shortly be gathered unto his fathers, Moshe is about to *teach* the people, *exhort* the people, *chastise* the people, *prophesy over* the people, and *empower* the people to do that from which their fathers and mothers shrunk back in fear. And every one of Moshe's weighty speeches to the generation of our ancestors poised on the precipice of destiny - his ***Devarim*** - are *just as pertinent for us today as they were for the 12 tribes of Israel waiting for the Holy One's word to cross the Yarden*. Let us pay attention to the words the Holy One put in the mouth of Moshe, and savor them as the last *love song* sung to us by the *friend of our Bridegroom*.

The Last Love Song

In today's aliyah Moshe explains to the new generation of B'nei Yisrael what went wrong to cause what could have been an 11-day hike to turn into a 40-year death spiral. Where along the way did our fathers go so terribly wrong? Moshe reminds us it took place:

Bamidbar mol Suf

in the wilderness near Suf

beyn-Paran uveyn-Tofel

in the region of Paran in the region of Tofel

v'Lavan v'Chatzerot v'Di Zahav

and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di Zahav.

Each of these name-drops is designed function like a bombshell; sending forth an explosion of memories that shakes us to our very souls.

Bamidbar – in the wilderness. Ah, do we ever remember the wilderness! It was where we found ourselves upon leaving Egypt. It brought out the worst in us. Every step was a challenge to our flesh. We deemed not being able to see beyond the horizon as an insult to our intellect. We had multiple crises of identity. We had repeated explosions of appetite. We had multiple eruptions of attitude. Truly, in the desert we behaved more like a shrew than a bride. We had many misunderstandings of relationship.

Suf – the Sea of Reeds. Who could forget this place? This was where our fathers and mothers trembled at the charge of Pharaoh’s chariot brigade. In sheer terror, we shouted angrily at Moshe and the Holy One: “*Was it because there were] no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you done this to us, taking us out of Egypt?*” **Exodus 14:12**. But that was not the end of the story. Do you remember what happened next? The enemy was held at bay by the Pillar of Fire and Cloud. The Wind started to blow. The waters of the sea parted for us. We walked through dry-shod, but those who sought our lives were destroyed without us firing a shot. We sang. We danced. We wept. The memories are almost too beautiful to describe!

Paran – the place where grumbling and complaining consumed us. We murmured and complained about manna. We lusted for flesh to eat – and made gorged ourselves on quail. Then we just kept sinking deeper into the snarky attitude of Hagar and Yishma’el. The spies gave an evil report – and we bought it! We jumped on Korach’s wagon of cynicism and abstract theory – and watched in horror as earthquake, fire, and plague took out the rebellious ones. When it was over, we still would not make teshuvah. We screamed at Moshe and the Holy One: “*You have killed the people of the Holy One!*” **Numbers 12, 14, 16:1-41**.

Tofel – whitewashing. This is not so much a place as it is a state of mind. It is a matter of rejecting accountability, and instead trying to hide toxic pockets of uncleanness under a thin veneer of self-righteous spirituality.

Lavan – the whiteness of Miryam’s skin when she was struck with *tzara-at* for her negative speech. With our minds and our mouths we became *as Lavan*.

Chatzerot – from a geographical standpoint, this was our first stop after the sin of the quail, where Miryam and Aharon spoke against Moshe, and Miryam. The actual name *chatzerot*, however, refers to confinement in an enclosure. As Miryam was sent outside the camp, we were effectively penned up, temporarily locked out of our quest for destiny – and ultimately sent back to Paran for reprocessing!

Di Zahav – meaning *day of, or ‘too much’ gold*. This may have been a place we passed along the way, but the words remind us that at Sinai, when the materials for the Tabernacle were being gathered, everyone among us with a willing heart brought gold to Moshe [Exodus 35:22] - so much gold, in fact, that Betzalel and Ohaliav declared that we were bringing ‘too much’. See **Exodus 36:5-7**. Oh, what passion we felt back then for the Holy One! Oh, what a hunger we had for His Manifest Presence! Oh, my – what happened to us along the way? *Selah!*

After dropping these bombshells and getting our undivided attention Moshe proceeds with his message by revealing to us for the first time that after 11 months of camping at *Mount Sinai* the Holy One had said to him:

Rav-lachem shevet b’har hazeh

Enough sitting around this mountain!

Wow! So ... there is a limit to how long our Bridegroom will allow us to just ‘sit under His Shade’. So ... the Torah is not just to receive – but to *do*. Yes, Beloved. The Torah is indeed the *blueprint for our destiny* – but receiving a blueprint is just the beginning. The things that were written on the blueprint we received at Sinai must, the Holy One tells us, not just be studied. They are to be *built* – *like Noah’s ark* - with the blood, sweat and tears of our lives and the lives of our children and our children’s children forever.

Rav-lachem. We had been sitting around at the base of the mountain basking in His Presence long *enough*. We are not, it seems, programmed just to be *receivers* of revelation. We are to be *transmitters* of revelation as well. Hence He appeared to Moshe and told him in no uncertain terms that it was time for us to move on. More specifically, Moshe now tells us, the Divine Bridegroom told him:

... uvo’u har ha-Emori

... head toward the highlands of the Amorites

[Deuteronomy 1:7]

We had no idea at the time that the Holy One had revealed what He was about to do in advance to His prophet. All we knew then was that the Cloud had lifted and headed toward the Wilderness of Paran.

Whither Thou Goest, I Will Go

We are all familiar with the famous line spoken by Ruth the Moavi, translated by King James’ English translators as “***Whither Thou goest, I will go***” **Ruth 1:16**. Rightfully these words have been repeated as wedding vows by, or sung on behalf of, blushing brides for generations. Even though they were originally spoken by one woman to another and carried no romantic meaning at all, these words have come to epitomize the basic commitment of a bride to her bridegroom – to go with him wherever he goes.

As we have previously discussed at length in these commentaries, Mount Sinai [also known as *Horeb*] was the place Israel became betrothed to the Holy One. It was the place we said our equivalent of ‘whither Thou goest’ to Him. The first real *test of the Bridal Commitment we made at Sinai will, appropriately, be whether we will indeed go with our Bridegroom wherever He goes. Such a test was the first test the Holy One required of Avraham. Genesis 12:1-2 [“... to a land I will show you”]. It was likewise the first test the Holy One required of Yitzchak. Genesis 22:1-3 [“... to the region of Moriyah”]. It was the first test the Holy One required of Ya’akov. Genesis 28:1-5, 15 [“... to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father, Betuel” ... “I am with you.”]. And it was the first test the Holy One required of Moshe. Exodus 3:10-12 [“... to Pharaoh ... and I will be with you”].*

We made many mistakes and committed many sins after leaving Sinai. Those mistakes and sins are catalogued in *Sefer B’midbar* [the Book of Numbers] the study of which we have just concluded. But the failure to go ‘whither thou goest’ only occurred in one place. That place was *Kadesh-Barnea*. At *Kadesh Barnea* we *simply* bowed our necks, sat down in the desert, dug our heels and burrowed our heads in the sand, *and* refused to let the Divine Bridegroom carry us across the threshold. That was our first real substantive test. And that – even more than the *chet ha-egel* [sin of the Golden Calf], or the murmuring and complaining, or Korach’s Rebellion, or even the sin of *b’not ha-Midyanim* [the daughters of Midyan] – was where we ‘blew it’, and forfeited – for one generation – our rights as the Holy One’s Bride.

If you will not go with your bridegroom wherever he takes you, Beloved, you may [will, if your Bridegroom is the Holy One] still be loved, *and you may [will, if your Bridegroom is the Holy One] still be provided for and cared for – but you can never become the bride you were created to be.* Hence although there were many sins and distractions which afflicted the generation the Holy One redeemed from Egypt and led forth to freedom by a pillar of fire and cloud, when Moshe catalogues for us the reasons why our fathers were unable to enter and possess the Promised Land, Moshe settles on the *chet ha-meraglim* [the sin of the spies] as the *decisive factor* - the “death blow” as it were. *Here is how Moshe describes the reaction of the people to the report of the spies: But you would not go up. Instead you rebelled against the direction of the Holy One your God” Deuteronomy 1:27(a).*

No one but a bride can go into the bridal chamber. And one who will not go ‘whithersoever Thou goest’ cannot be a bride.

The Bridal Chamber is No Place for People With a “Victim Mentality”

Why would we not ‘go up’ as the Holy One directed? Why did we rebel at Kadesh-Barnea? Moshe recalls it as follows:

*... in your tents you complained, ‘It’s only because the Holy One hated us
that He has brought us out of the land of Egypt,
only to hand us over to the Emori to destroy us.’*
[Deuteronomy 1:27(b)]

Oh my! In retrospect we can see it clearly – our fathers totally *lost touch with reality*. They panicked, and in their emotional state completely rewrote history. Though they were gloriously redeemed, they chose to see themselves as, of all things, *victims*. They created a world of virtual reality in which they saw ourselves *victims of hate* rather than as the objects of perfect love they really were. They chose to picture themselves as *victims of a deliverance they wanted no part of* rather than as a generation who had cried out time and time again to the Holy One because of Pharaoh’s oppression. They chose to imagine the Emori as inquisitors and executioners, rather than as a people judged and sentenced to destruction by the same God Who had, just for us, inflicted 10 plagues on Egypt and caused the mightiest army on earth to perish beneath the Sea of Suf without shooting a single arrow or inflicting a single casualty.

As we look back this week to the judgments released and holocausts loosed upon us over the centuries on the 9th of Av here is the spiritual truth we need to grasp - it is always rebellion against, and running from, the Holy One which causes people to miss out on His perfect Will. Oh, that does not mean that rebellion against the Holy One and running from Him is what usually gets *blamed*. What usually gets blamed, of course, are *bad things done by others* or *unfortunate circumstances*, or even Ha-Satan – because, you see, all human beings, from childhood, *love to play the victim*. The temptation, whenever things do not go perfectly, is to retreat into a “victim mentality” and *absolve oneself of all responsibility for one’s circumstances and negative behavior patterns*.

But the root of the problem, of course, lies not in the *mind*, nor in the *emotions*, nor in one’s outward circumstances. It lies *in the heart*. The issue is not whether psychological trauma or unpleasant circumstances have come into one’s life – of course they have (or *will*)⁴. True, the *degree* of traumatization varies from person to person, and from generation to generation – a minor *pogrom*, or banishment to a ghetto⁵, is less traumatic than the horror of facing the *Inquisition*, or having to pick

⁴ Hence Yeshua taught that it is “*inevitable that offenses will come*”. Luke 17:1.

⁵ The first people to be assigned to ghettos were not poor blacks, but Jews.

up and leave everything one knows in response to a king's/czar's expulsion order – and both are less traumatic than interment at Auschwitz or Dachau. But everyone tastes disappointment. Everyone experiences shattered dreams, and confronts the devastation of making disastrous – or potentially disastrous - mistakes. The promised destiny of the descendants of Avraham belongs to those who face such things, receive comfort from the Great Shepherd's rod and staff as they walk through the valley seasons, and therefore refuse the temptation to think of themselves as “*victims*”. The promises of the Holy One are reserved for those who choose to become the *overcomers*⁶ the Holy One empowers us to become, and therefore willingly go ‘*whithersoever Thou goest.*’

The issue therefore is whether or not, *in the midst of whatever trauma, abuse, or difficult circumstances one experiences*, one allows oneself to receive the Holy One's love. If one will only *receive His love*, that awesome force melts away all obstacles and vanquishes all enemies, robbing them of their “sting”. And then His strong, steady, covenant-based love always leads the object and recipient of His Love upward and onward, out of the rubble and the calamity, to greater heights than anyone had ever imagined.

Absolutely nothing can stand before or separate us from the covenant-affirming love of the Holy One. No trauma can do it. No obstacle course – nor even a gauntlet of pain – can do it. His love washes away all the scars, all the pain. We may have to limp, *or even crawl*, into His embrace - but once in His Presence we begin to learn how to dance like calves released from the stall. And not only does the Holy One's great love lead us *out of bondage* – it accompanies us, and leads us, step by step, day by day, to that place the Holy One has prepared for us. His love is our *companion*, our *comforter* – if we choose to accept it, embrace it, and let it heal our hurts and redeem our hearts and minds. May our song always be “*I will sing of His love forever!*”

The Song of the Redeemed

Alas Moshe tells us plainly that the song of the Holy One's love was not the song of the generation that came forth out of Egypt. Moshe remembers their words with sadness. And so should we. Our fathers, in response to the report of the spies at Kadesh Barnea, said:

*‘It's only because the Holy One hated us
that He has brought us out of the land of Egypt’*

⁶ See Luke 10:19, and I John 5:4-5. See also Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21, 12:11, & 21:7.

Ouch. Our fathers and mothers sang the song of *hate*, because they refused to receive His love. Their voices once burst forth with praise of the Holy One and danced to the beat of tambourines at the Sea of Reeds, singing:

*You, in your lovingkindness, have led the people that You have redeemed.
You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.
The peoples have heard. They tremble.*

*All the inhabitants of Kena'an are melted away. Terror and dread falls on them.
By the greatness of Your arm they are as still as a stone;
Until Your people pass over, O HOLY ONE,
Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.*

*You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance,
The place, O HOLY ONE, which You have made for Yourself to dwell in;
The sanctuary, O Holy One, which your Hands have established!*

[Exodus 15:13-17]

But the song that had burst forth from within them when they saw the Egyptian armor wash up on the shore of the Sea of Reeds fled from their lips when they heard of giants squatting on Avraham's inheritance in Eretz Yisrael. And suddenly the only song they could sing was "*it is because the Holy One hated us that He brought us out of Egypt*".

There it is - *victim mentality!* Embracing not the Holy One, but self-pity. Choosing to believe the age-old lie the Serpent told Chava in the Garden. Choosing to *lay down and die* rather than *get up and live*. Choosing to *complain instead of pray* and to *walk in rebellion and bitterness of soul* rather than *run to the Bridegroom's side, submit to His will and walk in His ways*. Choosing to *search for someone to blame* rather than own up to responsibility.

Each person, each couple, each family, each clan, each community, each ethnic group, and each nation must choose as his/its life principle either the *victim mentality* or *the love of the Holy One*. Choosing the *victim mentality* may, temporarily at least, win some pity from fellow men - but it will ultimately *swallow you* in the desert death spiral. The love of the Holy One, on the other hand, will free you from caring what other men think or say, will release over you all the healing, restorative power at the Holy One's disposal, and will lead you step-by-step into all the fullness of the inheritance He has lovingly prepared for you.

If like the generation which came out of Egypt one chooses, deep down, to believe that the Divine Bridegroom *hates*, not loves them, he or she will always suspect that the Holy One's will for them is to do them harm. Believing this the person will eventually *rebel*, will *refuse to follow the voice of the Bridegroom*, will *go his or her own way* - and will *die in the desert*. That which was intended as a catapult

into His Presence becomes the vortex of a death spiral. And it is no one's fault but our own.

Today, if you hear His Voice, harden not your heart.

[Hebrews 3:7]

Facing Up to the Mistakes of the Past – Ours and our Forefathers

Moshe begins his final exhortations to the Redeemed Community by recounting their short history as a nation. He does not shy away from the high points or the low points of that history. After discussing in detail the sin of the spies Moshe tells us something the narrative of Sefer *B'midbar* does not contain:

*I said to you, "Don't dread, neither be afraid of them.
The Holy One your God who goes before you, He will fight for you,
according to all that he did for you in Mitzrayim before your eyes,
and in the wilderness, where you have seen
how the Holy One your God bore you as a man does bear his son,
in all the way that you went, until you came to this place."*

Yet in this thing you didn't put your trust in the Holy One your God . . .

[Deuteronomy 1:29-32]

How about *you*, Dear Reader? '*In this thing*' – whatever challenge *you* face in *your* life at this juncture - will *you* put your trust in the Holy One your God? In the face of whatever giants stand between you and your destiny *what will be your song*? Moshe, the friend of the Bridegroom wants to know.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Let us start our study of the final sefer of Torah with some basic questions.

[A] What is the Hebrew name for this week's parsha?

[B] What is the English meaning of that Hebrew name?

[C] Look up the Hebrew word and its root in Strong's and Gesenius and describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing

[D] How many days' journey should it have been from Mt. Horeb [also called Mt. Sinai] to the Promised Land?

[E] How long did it take the Children of Israel to enter the Promised Land after leaving Mt. Horeb?

[F] According to Parsha *Mattot* [See Numbers 33:1-49] the Israelites camped at forty-two different places before they entered the Promised Land. If they spent an equal amount of time at each place they camped, how long would they have camped at each place?

[G] Explain in an essay the system of government the Israelites had while they were in the Wilderness. See especially verses 12-18.

2. Yeshayahu's first chapter contains an indictment of both *Yisrael* [Israel, the Northern Kingdom] and of *Y'hudah* [Judah, the Southern Kingdom]. Yeshayahu discusses the sins and failures of the people of both nations, and calls for repentance.

Hear, heavens, and listen, earth; for the Holy One has spoken:

"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

*The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib;
But Yisra'el doesn't know, My people don't consider.*

*Ah sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity, a seed of evildoers,
Children who deal corruptly!*

*They have forsaken the Holy One. They have despised the Holy One of Yisra'el.
They are estranged and backward."*

[Isaiah 1:2-4]

[A] In your Bible Dictionaries, or any other source material you may have, look up the prophet known to the Western world as *Isaiah*. Write a one-page essay in which you discuss the following:

- i. the meaning of his name;
- ii. what tribe he was from;
- iii. the era in which he lived and prophesied;
- iv. the major events of his life; and
- v. the main points of the prophecies the Holy One delivered through him.

[B] Concerning what two nations did the Holy One show Isaiah visions?

[C] How did Yeshayahu describe the sins of the nation in his day?

[D] According to today's verses, what things do an ox and a donkey know that Israel in Isaiah's time had not learned or even thought about?

3. In today's reading from the apostolic scriptures Shaul of Tarsus begins a discussion of "*episkopos*" - overseers, guardians. Before the week is over he will proceed to a discussion of *diakonos* - "servants". Here is how the teaching begins in I Timothy 3:1:

This is a faithful saying:

if a man desires⁷ to be an overseer⁸ [KJV, 'bishop'], he desires⁹ a good¹⁰ work¹¹.

⁷ The word is *oregomai*, Strong's Greek word # 3713, pronounced *or-eg'-om-ahee-* to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something.

⁸ The Greek word our English Bibles translate as "overseer", or "bishop" is *episkope*, Strong's Greek word #1984, pronounced *ep-is-kop-ay'*. This is a word Yeshua used in Luke 19, when He said of the City of Jerusalem: ". . . *the days will come on you, when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, tizit you in on every side, and will dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another, because you didn't know the time of your visitation* [episkope]." This Greek word *episkope* is derived from the verb *episkeptomai*, Strong's Greek word #1980, pronounced *ep-ee-skep'-tom-ahee*, which means *to visit, go to see someone, in order to see how he is, or to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with the eyes*. This is a verb Yeshua used in

Beloved I regret to inform you that the concept of “*overseer/bishop*” has been much misunderstood and horribly misapplied by a Christian leadership ever eager to justify its ecclesiastical “authority” - *despite its divorce from its Hebraic roots*.

[A] In your Bible Dictionaries or any other source material you may have, look up the friend of Shaul known to the Western world as *Timothy*. Write a one-page essay in which you discuss the following:

- i. the meaning of his name;
- ii. what lineage he came from; and
- iii. the major events of his life.

[B] Shaul indicates to Timothy that the faithful consider aspiring to be an *episkope* is a “noble” thing. In Strong’s, look up the Greek word translated as “noble”, and write that word and its definition. What Hebrew word would correspond to this definition, and how would the Hebraic concept differ from the Greek abstract thought?

[C] In your own words describe the characteristics that you believe you would see in a person the Holy One has graced and established in your community as an *episkope*.

[C] Why, in your opinion, did Shaul say being an *episkope* is a “noble” thing? What is “noble” about an *episkope*?

[D] How could your life benefit by knowing a true Biblical *episkope*?

[E] What things would need to change in your life for you to become a true Biblical *episkope*?

Matthew 25:36, when He said: ***Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited [episkeptomai] Me: I was in prison, and you came unto me.***

⁹ The word is Strong’s Greek word # 1937 *epithumeo*, pronounced *ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o* - to have a desire for, long for, to desire. First usage = ***Matthew 5:28: But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.*** See also Matthew 13:17: ***“many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see [those things] which ye see***

¹⁰ The word is Strong’s Greek word # 2570 *kalos*, pronounced *kal-os'* – defined by Strong's as *beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable OR good, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its ends*. The first Biblical usage of this word is in Matthew 3:10: “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

¹¹ The Greek word is Strong’s Greek word # 2041 *ergon*, pronounced *er'-gon* - that which one undertakes to do, enterprise, undertaking; an act, deed, thing done: the idea of making something useful out of raw materials, through application of labor and skill thereto. See Matthew 5:16, where Yeshua used this word, saying: ***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*** See also John 11:2, where we are told: ***“John had heard in the prison the works of Messiah, [so] he sent two of his disciples”*** *Ergon* can thus be seen to be the Greek version of the Hebrew word ***asah***, with all its implications.

*May the love of the Holy One engulf you as a flood,
And established you as a true Biblical episkopos wherever you sojourn.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Lamentations 1:1-4¹²

*How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
She has become as a widow, who was great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces is become tributary!*

*She weeps sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her:
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
they are become her enemies.*

*Yehudah is gone into captivity because of affliction,
and because of great servitude;
She dwells among the nations, she finds no rest:
All her persecutors overtook her within the straits.*

*The ways of Tziyon do mourn,
because none come to the miqraot [i.e. prophetic rehearsals/feasts];
All her gates are desolate, her Kohanim do sigh:
Her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is in bitterness.*

¹² *Tisha b'Av* [the 9th day of the 5th Biblical month], the day we remember and bewail the destruction of the First and Second Temples, as well as the acceptance by the Redeemed Community of the negative report of the spies, is rapidly approaching. Until then, our meditation each day will be taken from the Book of Lamentations, composed by Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] as our ode to the destroyed Temple, and the departure of the Cloud of the *Radiant Presence* from our midst.