

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Va'etchanan:*** Deuteronomy 6:1 –7:11
 Haftarah: Isaiah 40:18-26
 B'rit Chadasha: Mark 12:32-34

Hear, O Israel

[Deuteronomy 6:4]

Today's Meditation is Song of Solomon 4:6-16;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 2nd Blessing, *Gevurot* [The Prayer of His Powers]

Vezot ha-mitzvah ha-chukim v'ha-mishpatim – And these are the specific covenantal directives, general life instructions, and redemption-promoting decrees ... *asher tzivah Adonai Eloheichem l'lamed etchem* – that the Holy One your God has charged me with the responsibility to teach you Deuteronomy 6:1a.

Welcome to the aliyah that introduces the *Sh'ma* and *V'ahavta* declarations that constitute both the *heartbeat of the Covenant* and the *center of gravity of the Kingdom*. Moshe is about to teach us the secrets to the success – or failure – of our Great Kingdom Mission. These secrets have to do with staying in *constant encounter mode* with, and well and faithfully co-tenanting the Creation Ecosystem with, the Holy One. Are you ready for that kind of a. intimacy, and b. cross-generational impact? Are you ready for the instant accountability that goes with those things? Do you understand the delight such things entail? Do you understand the wisdom - and the *potential for impact upon your city, nation, and generation* – that come with such a walk? Have you counted *the cost* – of having ... and of NOT HAVING ... that kind of relationship with the Creator?

From Mount Sinai to the Plain of Moav – Moshe's Assignment: Teaching B'nei Yisrael 'Ha-Mitzvah, Ha-Chukim v'Ha-Mishpatim'

The God/man Covenant of *purposeful life* and *shalom* comes with a host of promises and privileges; but all those promises and privileges are subject to conditions. The Holy One's love for all living creatures is unconditional – but His blessing upon human beings is anything but. What makes one a person of the Covenant is his/her embracing of and adherence to the Holy One's '*Kedusha Code*' – *i.e.* His prescribed code of clearly prescribed conduct, commitment, continence, and constancy. This code consists of the following elements:

1. *a general charge of devotion* - a lifestyle of *sh'ma-ing*;
2. an overall commitment to the Holy One, His Plan, and His Ways – *sh'mar-ing* the

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Covenant

3. 'devarim' – general words of identity definition and mission activation;
4. situation-specific life instructions – the 'mitzvot';
5. directives the purpose for which we do not fully grasp, but which build trust and intimacy in relationship – the *chukim/chukot*;
6. long-term redemption/restoration-promoting decrees – *i.e.* 'mishpatim';
7. stories that reveal the Holy One's character and how to and not to respond to Him - *i.e.* 'testimonies' [in Hebrew, *edut*].

In order for the Kingdom of Heaven to come and the will of the Holy One to be done on earth as it is in Heaven we have to embrace and walk in the Covenant's *purposes*, its *priorities*, its *responsibilities of loyalty*, its *protocols of decorum*, its *rules of engagement with the raging nations* and *vain-imagination-obsessed people groups of our age*, and its *etiquettes of interaction with our King and with one another*.

Do you remember what the Holy One told Yitzchak constituted the secret of the blessing on his life. He said:

I will be with you, and will bless you ... because Avraham sh'ma-ed My Voice, and sh'mar-ed My mishmoret, My mitzvot, My chukot, and My torot.

Genesis 26:3-5

Our assigned role in the Grand Plan of Redemption is to be like Avraham in all those regards. Avraham's fealty to the Covenant released waves of blessing and *tikkun* into his own bloodline. We are to called to release similar waves of blessing and *tikkun* into all the bloodlines with which the Holy One allows us to connect. But we cannot do that on our own. We need to partner with the Holy One – and do these things His way, in His power, for His glory.

It Is DECISION TIME:

What Level of Relationship With Your Creator – and How Frequent and Meaningful Communion With Him – Do You Desire to Have At This Stage In Your Life?

Moshe knows a thing or two about *maintaining an intimate Covenant Communion with the Bridegroom King in real time*. He knows what amazing benefits and insights such communion provides; and he also knows the price that he has paid for that communion in fleshly, temporal currency. Moshe's experience started with a burning thorn bush – but did it ever escalate from there! Encounter begat encounter. Curiosity begat obsession. Drawing begat seeking. Overwhelm begat surrender. Conversation spilled over into downloads of wisdom. Heaven to earth discourse graduated to face-to-Face discussion. Revelation droplets opened the door for revelation showers. *Devarim* begat a great *Neshamah awakening*. The great *Neshamah awakening* begat a season of radical deprogramming and

redeployment. *Sh'ma*-ing beget assignment, commissioning, empowering ... and IMPACT. Oh, what impact! Deep impact. Cross-generational impact. Paradigm shifting impact. World changing impact. Kingdom advancing impact. Are you *in*?

Except for Mashiach Himself, Moshe is without question the top-ranking expert in the field of God/Man interactions. And he actually wants – indeed is under Divine Orders - to share everything he knows about the subject with the likes of us. Welcome to the aliyah of the *sh'ma* and *v'ahavta*. If you want to follow Moshe's lead and take your relationship with the Creator to a level of DEEP IMPACT, this passage is your portal, your blueprint, and your booster rocket.

***Sh'ma Yisrael! The Holy One Your God, the Holy One is Echad!
And You are to Love the Holy One Your God With All Your Heart,
With All Your Soul, and With All Your Strength***

Wow! There it is. Nowhere else in of Holy Writ is the all-important subject of *how we, as redeemed individuals and as part of a Covenant nation, are supposed to relate to our Redeemer and Covenant Partner* covered so thoroughly and so poignantly. The next phase of our prophet-turned-rabbi's discourse will provide us with *the ultimate friend of the Bridegroom's playbook for a lifestyle of constant Divine encounter and interaction*. For all who wish to embrace the *sh'ma* and *v'ahavta* journey Moshe offers the following wise counsel: ***L'ma'an tira et-Adonai Eloheicha*** – *out of/for the sake of your reverential awe for the Holy One your God -* ***lish'mor et-kol-chukotav umitzvotav*** – *cherish, treasure, and carefully guard His instructions and directives -* ***atah uvincha uven-bincha*** – *you, and your children, and your children's children*. **Deuteronomy 6:2**. In other words, unless and until you start to esteem, embrace, and joyfully take on the yoke of the Holy One's revealed wisdom - namely His Torah – simply because it is OF HIM, THROUGH HIM, and FOR HIM WHOM YOUR SOUL LOVES- there is no way you will be able to walk in the *sh'ma* and *v'ahavta* 'DEEP IMPACT' level of communion and co-laboring to which the Holy One is calling you. Torah is for lovers of God. you see. And lovers of God are wrapped up in Torah every bit as tightly as a newborn baby is wrapped up in swaddling clothes. There are no shortcuts. There is no other way. There is no 'other hand'. As Yeshua put it: ***“They have Moshe and the Prophets – let them sh'ma them! ... If they do not sh'ma Moshe and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*** Luke 16:29, 31.

Okay - take a deep breath. Some truly key elements of your *identity, your calling,* and your *mission on earth* are about to be revealed. Moshe is about to *take us to school*.

***Calling Forth An Awestruck People –
Men, Women, Youth, and Children With Sh'ma-ing Hearts, And Who,
at the Call of their King, are Willing to Embrace a CROSS-GENE-
RATIONAL, PARADIGM SHIFTING, DEEP IMPACT Mission!***

The Holy One designed human beings to converse with, respond to, and co-labor with His Creator at levels that would make any angel's head spin. Genesis 1:26-28 details how, from the beginning, humankind was created with both the *capacity* and the *deep need* to have a steady flow of meaningful, life-changing encounters with the One Who willed him into existence programmed right in. In order to empower man to know and receive downloads from and act in concert with Him the Creator gave man the desire, and the ability, to *listen for, hear, get in tune, time, and rhythm with and respond to* – *i.e.* to *sh'ma* - both *the Divine Voice* and *the inimitable Sound of Divine Movement*. Hence, Adam and Chava actually heard the 'sound' of the Holy One walking in the Garden. **Genesis 3:8 (a)**; see also **Exodus 19:16** and **Psalm 47:5**. To seal the deal and provide the power source for the *sh'ma*-ing software He had installed, the Holy One also breathed into man His own Essence and Breath. **Genesis 2:7**. Unlike the other creatures, therefore, man does not just have a form/body and a mind/will/emotion matrix [*i.e.* the pseudo-intellect, or *nefesh*]; man also has something very special - a *neshamah*.

Imagine that – not only hearing when the Holy One *speaks*, but even *sh'ma*-ing when He so much as *moves*! Alas, this is seldom man's experience today. The din of other voices – and other movements in the earth – has dulled our hearing. But if the *desire* to listen for, hear, and respond to the Holy One is regained, the ability to do so will not be far behind. This is the reason the Holy One did not hesitate to allow the Serpent into the Garden. He knew exactly what would happen – *i.e.* that the Serpent would successfully 'hack into' man's mainframe, so to speak, and hijack man's hearing and responding capacities for his own perverse ends. But the Holy One also had a stunning plan - at an appointed time, He would call forth a people to arise and tune into His Voice and the indigenous, inimitable sound of His Movements once again.

May the Voice of the Holy One – and the sound of His Movements - be heard and heeded anew, in our time! Dear Reader, may you be among the people whom the Holy One empowers to reclaim both the *desire* and the *ability* to *sh'ma* Him – instead of the Serpent - in all things, at all times, for all time.

This Divinely ordained and empowered process of recovering and reclaiming has to start, Moshe wants us to know, with '*the commandment*' [*ha-mitzvah*], *the statutes* [*ha-chukim*], and *the judgments* [*ha-mishpatim*] of the Holy One. These are the

building blocks. These are the foundation stones. These are the power sources.

***Blessed Is The People/Nation Who Knows [Hebrew yada]
the 'Joyful Sound' [Hebrew, Teruah] of the Holy One! [Psalm 89:15]***

We whom the Holy One has redeemed are a *specialty chosen and prepared people*. What is more, we are a people with a MISSION to perform. We are not just 'saved'. We are not just 'forgiven'. We are not just 'going to Heaven'. We are part of a well-conceived "Master Plan" for the redemption of Creation. We are the Holy One's 'special forces' on earth, strategically placed by His Hand in pre-ordained places at Divinely calendared times and seasons to conduct 'special operations'.

In today's aliyah we will receive the instructions for not only how to stay in constant encounter and communication mode; we will also be given the parameters of the GLORIOUS MISSION for which we have been chosen and prepared. Imagine that the theme from 'Mission: IMPOSSIBLE'² has just started playing in the background. *Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is*

The Classified Pre-Mission Briefing

Today's aliyah consists of a classified briefing by Moshe. He is briefing us on our 'Top Secret' mission in this world. The Eternal One, blessed be He, has a *wonderful destiny* planned for His People, individually and collectively, related to our mission. He wants nothing but the best for his *Kallah* [Bride]; He has therefore prepared for the Redeemed Community, and brought us to the brink of, a land *zavat chalav ud'vash* [flowing with milk and honey]. That land is the *heder yichud* [bridal chamber] prepared by the Holy One for His beloved Bride. The Eternal One has also designed for us a cross-generational life mission for us to launch from the beautiful *heder yichud* He has prepared for us.

L'ma'an tira et-Adonai Eloheicha

For the sake of your reverential awe of/respect for the Holy One your Lord,

Lish'mor et-kol-chukotav

treasure, cherish, and diligently watch over/keep/guard all His directions

umitzvotav asher anochi m'tzaveicha

and His life-instructions with which I am enjoining you

atah uvin'cha uven-bin'cha kol yemei chayeicha

You, your children and your children's children all the days of your life;

ul'ma'an ya'arichun yameicha

In order that your days may be prolonged.

² I am referring to the television series called "Mission: Impossible" from the mid-1960s, later made into a series of popular movies [Paramount, 1996 ff]. The series and movie revolved around a secret espionage group that was assigned extremely difficult infiltration assignments.

V'shamata Yisra'el
 And **sh'ma** [listen, hear, respond, obey] therefore, Yisra'el,
v'shamarta la'asot
 and you are to **observe³/be careful** to do it;
asher yitav lecha v'asher tir'bun me'od
 that it may be well with you, and that you may increase mightily,
ka'asher diber Adonai Elohei avoteicha lach
 even as the Holy One God of your fathers promised regarding you
eretz zavav chalay ud'vash
 in a land flowing with milk and honey.
[Deuteronomy 6:2-3]

Our mission, while fraught with danger, will not be an unpleasant one. Note therefore that the mission we are given to perform in this life – *sh'ma*-ing, *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing the Holy One's Torah in *yirat Adonai* [the reverence of the Holy One] - is also shown to be *the secret to experiencing success and fulfillment in the new home the Holy One is providing us*. The mission the Holy One entrusts to us is the essence of the lifestyle of Yeshua, who is “*faithful as a son over God's house*” [Hebrews 3:6].

The mission is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is the same in Israel and in exile⁴. It is the same for the native-born Israelite and for the foreigner⁵. If we build our lives around this mission, and conform our thoughts, words, relationships, and actions to the pattern revealed by Moshe, and modeled for us by Messiah Yeshua, we will become the “sons of God” for which all creation groans in eager expectation [Romans 8:19-23]. This - and nothing less - is ‘... *your mission, should you choose to accept it.*’

³ The word our English Bibles translate as ‘observe’ is a form of the Hebrew verb *sh'mar*, *shin*, *mem*, *resh*, meaning *to treasure, to cherish, to guard as a precious possession, to be protective of, and/or to be a watchman concerning, something extremely valuable*.

⁴ Some of the *mitzvot*, such as the *ma'aser* [tithe], the *sh'mittah* [7th year Sabbath of the Land] the *Yovel* [Jubilee], *ha bikkurim* [first fruits], and the *korbanot* [usually translated as ‘offerings’], among others, are clearly *performable* only in Eretz Yisrael. That does not make them any less relevant or meaningful to those of us in the *galut* [exile]. It merely means that our ability to participate *actively* in them must await our return to the Land, and, in some instances, the rebuilding of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] or other form of *Mik'dash* [Holy Sanctuary]. They are still part of our spiritual DNA, and are to be ever a part of our consciousness.

⁵ This is not to imply that Torah observance is a means of obtaining ‘salvation’ or earning a place in the World to Come. The *yasha* [salvation] of the Holy One and inheritance in the World to Come are obtained solely through *emunah* – the Hebraic concept our English Bibles clumsily translate as ‘faith’. True Torah observance, in the spirit and power of Messiah, is an outgrowth and natural result of the *yasha* of the Holy One. Torah observance is natural for any person indwelt by the Messiah, Who, after all, is the author of Torah, and is 100% Torah observant. If He truly lives in us, and if we are truly united with Him in the *Ruach*, we will do as He does – *i.e.* we will do Torah.

Powered by Love

The Mission is – at least seems like – Mission: *Impossible*. The Torah of the Holy One is so vast. His ways are so much higher than our ways. His Will is so much stronger than our will. Our spiritual ears are so underdeveloped. Our spiritual vision is so myopic. Our egos are so frail. Our need for approval from man is so strong. Our flesh is so demanding. Our time is so short.

It is overwhelming. It boggles the mind. How can He possibly have chosen us for this mission? How can we possibly function as the agents the Holy One redeemed and recreated us to be? How can we – carnal and shortsighted as we are – be what He has prophesied over us that we will be? Good questions, no?

A Matter of Trust

The answer to all the questions I have asked above all comes down to one thing - *Do you **trust** Him?* I don't mean do you 'believe' He exists. I don't mean have you at some time in your life *prayed a 'save me' prayer* or made a *profession of faith* in Him. I don't mean are you trying your best to *be a good person*. I mean *have you CUT COVENANT WITH HIM – on HIS terms* - like Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov did? I mean *have you received and accepted as ultimate truth and perfect instruction for living His Words of Betrothal [the Torah], as Israel did at Sinai?* I mean *are you willing to let His Word do what His Word does - bring miracles to pass - quite without your help, much less your understanding?* I mean *are you willing to surrender to the process He has activated in you?* I mean *are you willing to forego your own ideas of what 'ministry' and 'authority' consist of, and choose His will, His way, and His timing* over the opportunity to receive *accolades of men and affirmation from your closest associates*. I mean *are you willing to let all glory, honor, and appreciation go only to the Holy One?*

Have you learned *to receive the covenant love of the Holy One?* Sons of God, you see, are *powered by love*. Not *their* love. *His* love.

The Appropriate Response of A Redeemed People

Moshe tells us that the Eternal One, our Bridegroom, *is faithful* to His Covenant and *is therefore to be trusted* to make happen what He has promised. Moshe wants us to understand that the love of our Bridegroom is *an all-encompassing love, a jealous love, one that deserves and demands a total surrender – and one that transforms, empowers, and equips* all who will only receive it. In light of these unchanging truths, a certain response is in order from us. What is the appropriate response?

The appropriate response of a redeemed people is *to conform to the image the Holy*

One has prophesied over us. The appropriate response of a redeemed people is to conform our lives, day by day, to the pattern established for us in His Mitzvot, His Mish'patim, and His Chukim. The appropriate response of a redeemed people is to learn to think only Torah-like thoughts, to nurture only Torah-consistent attitudes, to speak only Torah-cognizant words, and to act only according to Torah-consistent behavior patterns. That is, you see, what it means – and looks like - to love the Holy One our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

But Aren't the Mitzvot of Torah 'Works of the Flesh'?

Ah, but some say, “*the mitzvot, mish'patim and chukim of the 'law' are merely 'works of the flesh' – what do they have to do with 'love'?*” Do not listen to such nonsense! Doing the things Torah says to do, and refraining from doing the things Torah says to avoid, are not – contrary to popular attention – ‘works of the flesh’. Just think about it. *Works of the flesh* are, by definition, *man-powered works*. They must, by definition, be *conceived by man, designed by man, and empowered by man*. The *mitzvot, mishpatim and chukim* of Torah however are in no wise *man-conceived*. Nor are they *man-designed*. And neither are they *man-empowered*. They are instead Words spoken from the same Source that said ‘**Light, Be!**’ in Genesis 1:3. They are Spirit-breathed Words that are *filled with creative power* to bring into being that which they say.

For a redeemed person walking out the Words of the Holy One – *i.e.* the *mitzvot, mishpatim, and chukim* spelled out in the Holy One's Torah - simply cannot, by definition, be a ‘work of the flesh’ *because the Holy One's Words are Spirit*. The *mitzvot, mishpatim and Chukim* spelled out in Torah are not works of the flesh – but the expected outworking of the *DNA* of the *neshamah* [eternal spiritual core] of every person the Holy One has redeemed and recreated. Don't believe me? Well, do you believe Yeshayahu [Isaiah]? Yeshayahu quoted the Holy One as saying:

*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
So will My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me void, but it will accomplish what I please,
And it will prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

[Isaiah 55:10-11]

The power-source of the words of Torah – the *mitzvot, mishpatim, and chukim* declared therein, is none other than the unbridled prophetic, creative energy of the Voice of the Omnipotent God of the Universe. The power to do the *mitzvot* is *in the mitzvot*, not the flesh of the man. The power to live by the *mishpatim* is *in the mishpatim*, not flesh of the man. The power to walk out the *chukim* is *in the chukim*, not flesh of the man. What is *man's involvement*? Think of mowing your

lawn. Is the power to mow your lawn in *you* – or is it in that John Deere lawn tractor in your garage? It's in the John Deere – unless you get down on hands and knees and bite the grass off at ground level.

What is your involvement in mowing the lawn? It is to keep the John Deere fueled, oiled, and maintained, to start it up, and to sit on it and guide it as it mows the grass. Most of us, of course, go beyond the above. Most of us develop self-conceived *patterns* of mowing the grass. We choose to always start at a certain place, and to always end at a certain place. We choose to drive that John Deere in a particular routine, time after time.

Do you see it yet? The mowing of the grass is not a work of the flesh. What is a work of the flesh is the pattern, practice, and routine we develop in connection with the mowing of the grass.

Now let's apply what we have learned to Torah. The power to do the *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukim* of Torah is Spiritual power, inherent in the Words of the Holy One themselves, not in us. But over time man has chosen to *add* to the Holy One's Torah man-made routines and patterns. Those man-made things are the *works of the flesh*. They are 'fences around the Torah' – things done not because the Holy One spelled them out, but because a Jewish sage or rabbi [or a Christian preacher or theologian] – or we ourselves - said we should do them.

A Simple Example

Want an example? Okay, let's look at the *mitzvah* to write the Torah on the doorposts of our houses and on our gates, from today's aliyah. The *mitzvah* is Spiritual – God-breathed – and carries its own source of power of fulfillment of purpose. But men develop routines and practices, which over time crystallize into *halakah* – a 'work of the flesh' - in the form of a man-conceived pattern or routine as to how the *mitzvah* should be done. Hence, we have the 'laws of the mezuzah' – a set of rules, not found in the Holy One's Torah – about where to place and how to position a little box with a miniature scroll inside on what doors while saying what blessings.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this *halakah*. The fact that it is a *work of the flesh* does not, *ipso facto*, make it evil – it just means that it has no power of itself. As long as the *halakah* does not nullify - or distract from – the Spiritual reality behind the *mitzvah* of Torah to which it relates, and is recognized for the *work of the flesh* that it is, it does no harm, and can greatly assist in enjoyment and teaching of the *mitzvah*. But if the *halakah* ever is used as a standard by which to judge another – or is thought of as a means of 'pleasing God' - it has been misused.

Now, let's go back to the lawn mowing analogy for a moment. Imagine a man goes out to his garage, gets on his *John Deere* tractor, turns it on, and drives it around the yard in an impressive pattern of rectangles in cleared areas and circles around trees. Imagine that, as he did so, all the neighbors were 'wowed' by how majestically and resolutely he sat on the tractor, and how precisely he followed the pattern. But imagine that, when he finished, the lawn wasn't mowed, because, in all his driving around, he never engaged the blade of the mower. In that situation, the *halakah* has assumed more importance than the mitzvah. That's a good picture of a misuse of *halakah* – the 'bad' side of a 'work of the flesh'.

You can tell when *halakah* is being misused in your life. It is being misused in your life when, however well you perform the *halakah*, you do not exhibit certain Biblically described distinguishing characteristics of the Holy One's redeemed. Let's look now at those distinguishing characteristics.

Eight Distinguishing Characteristics of the Holy One's Redeemed

In the course of recreating us through the entry of His Words into our DNA the Holy One has 'programmed' us to *respond to His love, His covenant faithfulness, and His Voice in certain specific ways*. He has rewired us so that, if we will cooperate just a little, we will slowly start to *exhibit characteristics and approaches to life* that will clearly set us apart from the world around us.

In his second speech on the plain Moshe identifies 8 aspects of the new creation lifestyle – 8 identifying characteristics which we who are redeemed have been programmed to possess and exhibit as we live out lives *in the throes and passion of Divine Romance* which therefore overflow with *mitzvot, mish'patim* and *chukim*. As we study these 8 identifying characteristics consider how many of them are – and are not - presently evident in your life. Look in the mirror. And take a good, hard look at who is staring back at you from the glass. Here are the characteristics you should be beginning to see.

Identifying Characteristic #1: Yirat Adonai

[A Life Lived in Reverent Fear of the Holy One]

The first identifying characteristic of people the Holy One called out of darkness and redeemed is identified by Moshe as *yirat Adonai* – the reverent fear of the Holy One.

L'ma'an tira et-Adonai Eloheicha

Because of your reverential awe of the Holy One your God ...

[Deuteronomy 6:2]

Moshe's beginning of his briefing on our mission was to ***L'ma'an tira et-Adonai***

Eloheicha – i.e. remain ever in awe of the Holy One your Lord. *Yirat Adonai* is to be the first and most basic element of our lives. It is the key that unlocks all the spiritual potential the Holy One has hidden within us. Without *yirat Adonai* we will very quickly veer to the right or to the left of the path the Holy One has chosen for us, becoming either lawless or legalistic. What does *yirat Adonai* mean? It does not mean we are to think He is angry at us, or be afraid He will squash us like a bug. The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “fear” is a form of the Hebrew verb *yare*, meaning to feel awe in the Presence of, and to respect and reverence as totally transcendent in power, beauty, and holiness. It is the characteristic of the cherubim and serafim around the Holy One’s Throne who constantly declare His holiness, and the 24 elders who constantly fall down on their faces, and say “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Holy One Almighty*”.

Now Dear Reader, look in the mirror more closely this time. Does the man, woman or child looking back at you in your mirror display *yirat Adonai* as his/her most basic character trait?

Identifying Characteristic #2:

Sh’ma-ing the Holy One’s voice [Hanging On the Holy One’s Every Word]

The second identifying characteristic of people the Holy One has redeemed is that they *sh’ma* the voice of their Divine Bridegroom. Moshe says:

V’shamata Yisra’el

You are to sh’ma [listen, hear, obey] therefore, Yisra’el ...

[Deuteronomy 6:3]

Sh’ma Yisrael . . .

[Deuteronomy 6:4]

The natural response of one who *yare’s* the Eternal One is to *hang upon every utterance of His Mouth like a drowning man hangs upon a lifeline*. The Hebrew word for this is the verb root *sh’ma*, which is sometimes translated as *listen*, sometimes as *hear*, and sometimes as *obey*. The word means all of these things put together - and much more.

We are not just to *listen* for and to what the Holy One is saying, Beloved. We are to adopt His directives as the center of gravity of our thought-life, our self-talk, our conversations, our reactions, and our behaviors. We are to *intensely focus* our attention and energy on the Holy One’s pronouncements. As a plant stretches out in the direction of the sun to receive its life-giving rays, so our necks and spiritual ears are to be continually stretching toward the Divine Bridegroom’s Words, endeavoring to hear every word and receive every life-giving instruction for living exactly *as the Lover of our Soul spoke it*.

The study of Torah is not an academic exercise. Neither is Torah submission a 'work of the flesh'. Both Torah study and observance are natural responses to the prophetically empowering Voice of the Holy One. He has programmed us to hear His Voice and receive the life that is within His Words. When the Holy One's Words enter our consciousness they do not merely educate or inform us. They immediately begin to *transform* us. As the Holy One spoke into the darkness "*Let there be Light ...*", the words caused it to happen in Creation so when He speaks a *mitzvah* over us the power of His Words makes what He has spoken begin to happen. We "obey" therefore not out of hard work and striving, but out of the prophetic and creative empowerment His Word has introduced in us. We interact with Him through our study of and practical applications of His *mitzvot*.

We are supposed to understand from the very beginning that our mission is 100% "Mission: *Impossible*". *Yirat Adonai* is to teach us that there is no way on earth we could ever accomplish this mission – or any part of it - under our own power, through our own intellect or effort, or by our own will. *Sh'ma Yisrael* is to teach us to merely yield our minds, wills, emotions, organs of speech, and organs of activity to the creative power of the Holy One's Words, and let the Holy One accomplish the mission in and through us.

Identifying Characteristic #3:

***Relating to the Holy One's Echad-ness* [The Oneness Factor⁶]**

We are told in today's aliyah of our English Bibles that our God is 'one'. What does this mean? The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as "one" is *echad*⁷. This word means much, much more than that we are *monotheistic*. *Echad* is first used in Genesis 1:5, to describe *two things being brought together*, and made into a unified single unit:

*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first [echad] day.*

We also see this idea of *echad* in Genesis 2:24 when Adam said:

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:
and they shall be one [echad] flesh."*

Is it possible that the essential truth Moshe is teaching us about the Holy One is not *numerical*, but *qualitative*? Let me explain. The Holy One is multi-faceted, but 'together'. He is not different things to different people. He is not Allah to Muslims, Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild to Christians, Adonai to the Jews, the

⁶ *Echad* is *alef, chet, dalet*. Strong's Hebrew word #259, it is pronounced *ekh-awd'*.

⁷ When you read Deuteronomy 6:4 as read in a Torah scroll, the letters "ayin" in the word *sh'ma* [Hear] and the "*dalet*" at the end of *echad* are enlarged – encoded, the rabbis say, to spell out the Hebrew word *ayin, dalet*, pronounced *ayd*, and meaning "witness."

“Great Spirit” to the Plains Indians, or the ‘Higher Power’ to recovering substance abusers. He cannot be recast to fit our theologies. He defies definition. He is Who He is, and we put Him in theological “boxes” at our peril.

Moreover, the Holy One was, is, and will be, and changes not. The Holy One is not one thing today and another thing tomorrow. Though He may manifest Himself to us in any number of manifestations, all His manifestations are all going to be *consistent with who He is*, and will all *reflect the same essence*.⁸

To acknowledge the Holy One’s “*echad*”-ness is thus not merely to acknowledge that He alone is God, it is to acknowledge that nothing – us included – exists or matters except as it relates to Him. It is to acknowledge that life independent of Him is unthinkable, even if it were not impossible. It is to acknowledge that our purpose in life is to relate to Him, and that it is Him and Him alone to which we are to *join* ourselves, *bind* ourselves, *wrap* ourselves, and *intertwine* ourselves.

Identifying Characteristic #4:

Ahavat Adonai [Loving the Holy One our God . . .]

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as “love” is *ahav*, *alef*, *hey*, *beit*. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 22:2, where it refers to the relationship between Avraham and Yitzchak. Avraham is told to take his son, his *only* son, whom he *ahav*’s, to *Har Moriyah* [Mount Moriah], and there present him to the Holy One. One cannot grasp the significance of these statements unless one first remembers that Avraham had once had *another* son – Yish’mael. He had once been required to *choose* between Yishmael and Yitzchak. He *chose* Yitzchak, and he pursued and cultivated, and nurtured, and doted on his relationship with him, forsaking Yish’mael.

That is the perfect picture of *ahav*. It means to *consciously choose as a favorite*, to *pursue time with and fellowship and constant interaction with*, and to thereby *bond with*, someone, preferring that person’s company, ways, opinions, and values over any other. *Ahav* is therefore unlike the English verb “love”, which has come to mean merely *to be attracted to or to feel affection for*, something or someone. *Ahav* implies and results from a *choice made in the will*, not a feeling. It is a *commitment to the death*. It involves prioritizing the object of *ahav* over everything else. Hence Yeshua said *greater love no man has, than to lay down his life for his friends*.

The idea that we are to *ahav* the Holy One is somewhat overwhelming. It is, I believe, meant to be just that. It is meant to be *humanly* impossible to *ahav*. Why?

⁸ Think of water. Depending upon atmospheric conditions, water can manifest in 3 different forms – as a liquid, as a gas/vapor [steam], or as a solid [ice]. And yet if you analyze the content it always remains H₂O – *i.e.* water.

Because as aforesaid the Holy One created us to rely upon, and trust in Him. He created us to be *responders*, not *initiators*. He created us to be a *Bride* to Him, not a Husband.

The good news is that we do not *initiate ahav*. We do not “conjure it up”, or produce it with hype. True *ahav* is always a *response*. It is the *natural* response we should have to the love lavishly poured out upon us by the Holy One, our Bridegroom.

Identifying Characteristic #5:

The Setting of the Holy One’s words upon our hearts

Since love (*ahav*) for the Divine Bridegroom involves *choosing* His ways, His *devarim* (words) and His instructions for living [the Torah] should be *received* like a love-letter, *treated like a priceless treasure*, and *guarded* joyfully and enthusiastically. If we *ahav* the Holy One, His words are *precious* to us. We hang on each one. We meditate on them. We speak about them. We set them like a seal upon our hearts. What does that mean? It means that the Torah becomes the filter through which we process not only all *incoming stimuli* – all things we see, all words we hear, and all philosophies and teachings to which we are exposed – but also all *internally-generated emotions, attitudes, opinions, philosophies and appetites*.

To set the *mitzvot, mishpatim* and *chukim* of Torah as a seal upon our hearts means to let those Divine Empowerments and Directives *establish and define both our perspective on and our approach to all issues of life*. It means we embrace wholeheartedly the boundaries Torah places upon *all our thoughts, our values, our priorities, our appetites and our desires*, as well as the boundaries Torah places upon our speech and upon our actions. It means, unlike our mother *Chava* [Eve], we reject Serpent-speak that tells us to make our decisions and choices in life based upon what seems good and pleasant to our fleshly senses.

Identifying Characteristic #6:

Talking the Talk

Each of us is instructed by Torah *dibarta bam* [i.e. you are to speak them]. What does the pronoun ‘*bam*’ [them] refer to? The antecedent of *bam* is found back in verse 6 where Moshe speaks of: *ha-devarim ha-eleh asher anochi metzaveicha hayom - these words with which I am enjoining you today ...* What this means is that what we are to speak about, in plain and simple language, are the life-instructions the Holy One gave Moshe to teach to us. It means that our conversations, in our homes, our offices - wherever we go, are to be filled to the brim with references to and discussions about the *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* and *chukim* of Torah.

The *dibarta bam* empowerment means we have been enabled and commissioned to verbalize, to declare, to discuss, and to exhort. We are to whisper what our Bridegroom-King whispers, and shout what our Bridegroom-King shouts. Sometimes we will be called to chant – other times we will be inspired to sing. We will talk to ourselves. We will converse with others. But regular verbalization about the Torah is to be a big part of our lifestyle. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth is supposed to speak. Silence is, for us, not an option. Each one of us is specifically told to speak the words of Torah in *five specific contexts*.

First, each of us is told to speak of the life-instructions of the Torah *b'shivteicha b'veteicha* – *i.e.* whenever we sit down to rest (wherever that may be) in our homes. Secondly, each of us is told to speak the Torah *b'elechteicha ba'derech* – *i.e.* whenever we are in transit from one place to another [literally when you walk along the path]. Thirdly, each of us [as the 'you' referred to in this passage] is told to speak of the ways and teachings of the Torah *b'eshochbeicha* – in our laying down. Fourthly, we are told to speak of the Torah *b'kumeicha* – in our rising.

Hmmmmn. Those four contexts pretty well cover a pretty good chunk of my waking life – how about yours? Could it be that it is the Holy One's plan for my life that I am to be a guided missile of sorts, ever seeking an opportunity to initiate a conversation – with a family member, a business associate, a perfect stranger, or with the Holy One Himself - about the *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukim* of Torah?

Identifying Characteristic #7:

Taking Responsibility for Teaching Our Own Children the Torah

Torah, you will find, speaks over and over again about the transmission of Torah from fathers and mothers to their children. It may come as a shock to you, but Torah does not appear to even contemplate forming non-profit associations or other organizations to teach people Torah. Torah does not even mention the possibility that rabbis would teach *talmidim*. Search the pages of Torah over and over, and there is not even the most remote suggestion that in the Holy One's covenant community 'pastors' are necessary or desirable as teachers of Torah. Torah contemplates only one method of Torah teaching – that done by fathers and mothers with regard to their sons and daughters. The teaching of Torah, you see, is the duty – the non-delegable duty – of fathers and mothers. The delegation of this non-delegable duty to 'clergy men' and professional teachers - or even well-meaning volunteers - is clearly a *purely human invention*, a compromise, and a work of the flesh. But, you may wonder, how do ordinary men and women, never themselves trained in yeshiva or seminary, teach Torah? They can do it because true Torah knowledge does not come from time spent in a classroom or listening to a lecture. They can do it because true Torah knowledge comes from time spent reading and meditating and conversing and walking with the Holy One morning

and evening, and at every opportunity during the day.

Successful Torah teaching does not come from lesson plans. It comes, instead, from life. A parent whose heart is submitted to the Holy One and whose life is submitted to His Torah teaches Torah 24/7/365 by *how he/she lives*, by how he/she *communicates*, by how he/she *structures his/her life*, by how he/she *interacts with different types of people*, by how he/she *deals with life's challenges*, and by how he/she *responds to good –and bad - circumstances*.

Torah is taught by *modeling the Torah lifestyle*. The Holy One contemplated that we would teach our children His *mitzvot* by letting them see us, day in and day out, setting the Holy One's words constantly before *us* – before our eyes, on our doors and our gates. The Holy One contemplated that we would teach our children His *mitzvot* by having them watch us as we struggle to make and keep the Holy One's Torah the most pervasive influence in our lives. As we set the words of Torah upon our hearts, and as we view every waking moment as an opportunity to speak of Torah's *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukim*, you see, we will, quite naturally, find ourselves teaching (literally, impressing upon - imprinting into the very souls of) our children Torah. We *model* Torah for our children, by preferring His words over other passions and interests and hobbies. We do this by letting His Words – rather than our personalities, or our talents or vocations or interests – define who we are, what we think, how we interact with people, and how we live.

Ahav of the Holy One, you see, means we walk His words out every day in full view of everyone – in our houses, in our places of work, and in our community activities – whatever the consequence, whatever the controversy. *Ahav* means we do what we see the Father doing where it counts most – in our most intimate relationships – where *the rubber really hits the road*.

Identifying Characteristic #8:

Being a Torah Scribe – Wherever We Go

Each of us is also called upon to make the Torah's *mitzvot* visible and legible to all who know us. We are to inscribe them – on the doorposts of our houses, and on our gates. There is a literal and physical aspect of this, of course, hence we decorate our dwellings and work areas with *mezuzot* and things of that nature. But the literal, physical act of inscribing is only the 'opening' or passageway into the essence of the *mitzvah* of inscription Moshe spells out for us. Far beyond nailing a *mezuzah* on our doors and gates, the *mitzvah* of the Holy One calls us to so live, and talk, and express opinions, and relate to people, that the words of Torah are inscribed and imprinted – like footprints left in the sand - wherever we go. Our eyes, for instance, should inscribe Torah on everything at which they look. Our hands should inscribe Torah on everything they touch. Our lips should inscribe

Torah on the doorpost and gates of very conversation in which we engage. All the doorways of our households – *i.e.* every place we interact with our spouses, children, and parents, and every place from which we launch and initiate dealings of any kind with the Holy One’s Creation - should proclaim Torah.

Our mission is to make sure that the gates of our cities - *i.e.* all the places and situations where we interact with both neighbors and strangers and transact business – are inscribed with Torah. And by that I mean *living, breathing, real Torah*. Yes – that means Torah with skin on it. Your skin and mine, Dear Reader.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Before the Redeemed Community was told that the most basic secret to success and fulfillment of Divine Purpose is to “*love the Holy One*” our God, we were prepared for that passion by being instructed to feel/experience another response to the Divine Bridegroom. This previous response is designed by our Creator to precede and *open the doors of our hearts for an all-encompassing love*. What must come before love? [See Deuteronomy 6:2; see also 6:13, 24; Prov. 1:7]
2. List the things that the people of God are supposed to do with the instructions of Torah [6:6-9].
3. During what four activities are God’s people told to “talk about” the instructions of Torah?
4. In Deuteronomy 6:20-25 we are instructed what we are to tell our sons when those sons ask the meaning of the *mitzvot* of Torah.

When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What mean the testimonies, and the statutes and the ordinances, which the Holy One our God has commanded you?’

Then you shall tell your son, we were Pharaoh's bondservants in Mitzrayim: and the Holy One brought us out of Mitzrayim with a mighty hand; and the Holy One showered signs and wonders, great and sore, on Mitzrayim, on Pharaoh, and on all his house, before our eyes; and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore to our fathers.

The Holy One instructed us to do all these statutes, to fear the Holy One our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as at this day. It shall be righteousness to us, if we observe to do all this mitzvah before the Holy One our God as he has instructed us.

Now, summarize in your own words the response fathers are to make when asked about the *mitzvot*.

5. Why were the Israelites told to utterly destroy the former inhabitants of the

Land of Promise? [See especially verses 4 and 6]

6. Moshe concludes parsha *Va'etchanan* with the following “bookend” passage, summarizing what He has been teaching us:

*Know⁹ therefore the Holy One your God - He is God, the faithful God,
Who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with them who love Him
and who keep His mitzvot to a thousand generations,
and repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them:
He will not be slack to him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.*

*Therefore, keep [Hebrew, *sh'mar*] the mitzvah,
and the statutes [Hebrew, *chukim*], and the ordinances [Hebrew, *mishpatim*],
with which I instruct you this day, to do [Hebrew, *asah*] them.
[Deuteronomy 7:9-11]*

List the attributes and characteristics of the Divine Bridegroom of which Moshe reminded the Israelites.

7. We conclude this week’s haftarah – the first *haftarah of consolation* after the 9th of Av, with the following passage from the 40th chapter of the prophet *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah]:

*To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to him?
The image, a workman has cast [it], and the goldsmith overlays it with gold,
and casts [for it] silver chains.*

*He who is too impoverished for [such] an offering chooses a tree that will not rot;
he seeks to him a skillful workman to set up an engraved image, that shall not be moved.*

*Have you not known? Have yet not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?
have you not understood from the foundations of the eretz?*

*[It is] He who sits above the circle of the eretz, and the inhabitants of it are as grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in;
who brings princes to nothing; ‘who makes the judges of the eretz as vanity.*

*Yes, they have not been planted; yes, they have not been sown;
yes, their stock has not taken root in the eretz:*

⁹ The imperative verb our English Bibles translate as “know” in this and similar passages is *yadat, yod, dalet, ayin, tav*, a special form of the Hebrew verb *yada, yod, dalet, ayin*, Strong’s Hebrew word #3045, pronounced *yaw-daw*. *Yada* is a verb picturing the closest intimacy and familiarity. It is even used to describe the physical union of husband and wife – the phenomenon of two becoming one. The Hebrew consonants present a Hebraic ‘mural’ of the Holy One’s hand [yod] being on the door [dalet] of a man’s soul [ayin]. In this context, it does not refer to intellectual knowledge or doctrinal belief, as the English word “know” would infer; instead it refers to having an on-going, intimate, personal relationship with the Holy One, such as brings about a unity of thought, desire, will, emotion, expression, mannerism, and action. Picture a man dancing with his wife. The husband “leads” in the dance, by subtle cue letting his wife know what move he is going to make next. Because she ‘knows’ him, she catches even the subtlest of cues, such that she flows with him in the dance naturally, gracefully, as if they were one person. This is the picture the Hebrew verb *yada* is trying to show us, and is the degree of intimacy and closeness with the Divine Bridegroom that Moshe is telling us we are to cultivate. Yeshua said He only did what He saw the Father doing. He also said He only spoke what His Father told Him to say. This is *yada*.

moreover He blows on them, and they wither, and the whirlwind takes them away as stubble.

*To whom then will you liken Me that I should be equal [to him]? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these, who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name; by the greatness of his might,
and because He is strong in power, not one is lacking.*

[Isaiah 40:18-26]

[A] Read Acts 17:29. Then read Isaiah 40:18-21 again. Do you think it is a sin to draw pictures of or make statues of what we think Yeshua or the Holy One or the Holy Spirit looks like? Explain why.

[B] Read Isaiah 40:25. Do you think Ha-Satan [the adversary/accuser] is as powerful or as intelligent as God? Why or why not?

[C] Yeshayahu picks up the list of attributes and characteristics of the Holy One in Isaiah 40:22-26. List the attributes and characteristics of God pointed out by Yeshayahu.

8. The concluding verses of the apostolic Scripture reading I have selected for parsha *Va'etchanan* is Mark 12:32-33¹⁰. It reads:

*The Sofer [i.e. scribe] said to him, "Truly, teacher, you have said well that He is one,
and there is none other but He, and to love Him with all the heart,
and with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to
love his neighbor as himself, is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."
When Yeshua saw that he answered wisely,
He said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."
No one dared ask him any question after that.*

[A] Why do you think the Scribe in Mark 12:32-33 distinguished between loving God and the offering of 'sacrifices'? What is the difference?

[B] What do you think could be some wrong motives for offering sacrifices? Read I Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6, Micah 10:8, and Psalms 40:6-8.

[C] In Mark 12:34 Yeshua told the Scribe who had been questioning Him: "**You are not far from the kingdom of God**". What do you think Yeshua meant?

May you choose the Holy One's ways and His words as your life. Shabbat Shalom!

The Rabbi's son

¹⁰ In the Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha, this passage reads: "And the Baal Torah said to him, 'Well spoken, Rabbi, for you have said that the Holy One is *ECHAD* (one, DEVARIM 6:4), and *EIN OD* and there is no other [YESHAYAH 45:18] except him. [DEVARIM 4:35,39; YESHAYAH 45:6,14; 46:9] and to have *ahavah* for him *BECHOL LVAVCHA* (with all your heart) and with all your *binah UVECHOL MODECHA* (with all your strength DEVARIM 6:5) and *LREACHA KAMOCHA* (your neighbor as yourself, VAYIKRA 19:18) is greater [than] all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. [SHMUEL ALEF 15:22; HOSHEA 6:6; MICHOSH 6:6-8] And Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, when he saw that this Torah teacher answered with *chochmah* (wisdom), said to him, "You are not far from the Malchut the Holy One." And no one was daring to put a *sheelah* (question) in front of Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach again.

Meditation for Today's Study

Song of Solomon 4:6-16

[The Bridegroom speaks]:

*Until the day is cool, and the shadows flee away,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense.
You are all beautiful, my love. There is no spot in you.*

*Come with me from Levanon, my bride; with me from Levanon.
Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens,
from the mountains of the leopards.*

*You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride.
You have ravished my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.
How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine!
The fragrance of your perfumes than all manner of spices!
Your lips, my bride, drip like the honeycomb.
Honey and milk are under your tongue.
The smell of your garments is like the smell of Levanon.*

*A locked-up garden is my sister, my bride; a locked-up spring, a sealed fountain.
Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious fruits:
Henna with spikenard plants, Spikenard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the best spices,
A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, flowing streams from Levanon.*

[The Bride Responds]:

*Awake, north wind; and come, you south;
Blow on my garden, that its spices may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden, and taste his precious fruits.*