

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Ekev:*** **Deuteronomy 10:1-22**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 50:1-9**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 8:36**

Arise! Take Up Your Journey Afresh!

[Deuteronomy 10:11a]

Today's Meditation is Psalms 85:10-13;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 3rd Blessing, *Kadosh* [The Prayer of His Holiness]

Ba'et hahi amar Adonai elay – At that time the Holy One said to me ... ***P'sol-lecha shnei-luchot avanim*** – Hew out for yourself two tablets of stone ... ***karishonim*** – like the first ones ... ***va'aleh elay ha-harah*** – and ascend the mountain unto Me **Deuteronomy 10:1a.**

Gather around, children – it is story time again! Moshe is about to tell us about another stunning cautionary tale from the early, formative days of our nation! Get ready for the ‘rest of the story’ behind the tablets of testimony that rest inside the ark of the covenant.

And He Wrote on the Tablets According to the First Writing – Asert Ha-Devarim – and He Gave Them to Me!

It happened almost 40 years ago at Sinai - in the bloody aftermath of the golden calf debacle. Israel's ‘Gen-Ex’ - the generation of the Exodus - had just miserably failed our first test of covenantal identity. The Holy One had declared to us out of the fire that the first essential mark of our covenant identity was that we recognize Him both as one and only our God and as the One Who had brought us forth out of Egypt. **Exodus 20:1.** Within weeks, however, every man in the camp was standing at Aharon's tent demanding: ***Come, make for us gods that will go out before us*** **Exodus 32:1a.** For whatever reason, Aharon complied. He collected rings of gold from their ears, melted them down, and molded the gold into a calf-shaped idol our forefathers could venerate the way the Egyptians and Kena'ani venerate their gods. The crowd gleefully shouted: ***This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.*** **Exodus 32:4.** It was a face palm moment, to be sure; but, alas, it got worse from there. Once the abomination train leaves the station, the only questions remaining to be answered are how much devastation it will cause and how many lives/families it will destroy. After the idol was formed, Aharon proclaimed a holiday to celebrate it - and the party was on! A circle dance around

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Aharon's newly forged calf idol morphed into lewd exhibitionism; a 'cup of kindness' or two mutated into binge guzzling; a little harmless flirting escalated quickly into a Woodstock frenzy of 'free love'. Then Moshe heard the music and the raucous laughter –returned to camp – and flew into a murderous rage. He issued a call to arms. Swords were drawn. Holy war broke out. And soon the soil at the foot of the mountain of the Holy One ran red with blood. Three thousand widows mourned their husbands. Multitudes of fatherless waifs stared helplessly at mounds of dirt where the bloody remains of their beloved 'Abba' would lie motionless forever.

“*What will become of us now?*” everyone wondered. Would manna still fall in the morning? Would water still flow from the Rock? Would the shade of the Pillar of fire and cloud still protect us from the desert sun – and the hordes of desert raiders sent out by the warlords of Amalek, Edom, Yish'mael, Moav, and Midyan? Had we messed this new 'freedom' gig up so badly that it could not be fixed? Was the Avrahamic covenant over? Was the great 'Am Segulah Initiative' to be abandoned? Would we – could we – be forgiven? No one was really sure. And then came ... the Cleft of the Rock Experience!

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment!

What happened next left an indelible mark on Moshe. It was the beginning of his understanding of the Holy One's mercy, forgiveness, and grace. After Moshe had flown off into a fit of rage and smashed the first set of tablets the Holy One had inscribed as the blueprint for mankind's reclamation into a thousand pieces, the Holy One offered the ultimate 'do over'. All He said about what the people had done: ***V'echtov al-ha-luchot et-ha-devarim asher hayu al-ha-luchot ha-rishonim asher shibarta*** – now I will inscribe on the [new set of] tablets the devarim that were on the first tablets, the ones you shattered. No rant. No rage. No lecture. No condemnation. No change of plan. Sin has to have consequences – but mercy triumphs over judgment! *Selah!*

Legend tells us that it was on the new moon of the sixth month – *i.e. 1 Elul* – that a kinder, gentler, much more humble Moshe climbed the escarpment of Sinai one more time. He did not know he was about to have a new heart, a new mind, a more excellent vision, a clean slate, and a fresh start. He had no way of knowing that forty days later, when he returned to the camp he had turned into a war zone, his face would be shining with the radiance of the King.

It is Our Appointed Time to Arise – and to Be Immersed Once Again In Heaven's Revelation Stream!

As we have been discussing all week, *Ekev* is the *parsha* of the Footprint People.

With that in mind, I have some questions for you:

1. To what *information stream[s]* are you connected?
2. Are you drinking daily of the living water of the Rock of Horeb and warming your heart daily by the eternal fire burning atop Mount Sinai – or are you just soaking your brain in the teachings of ordinary men?
3. Are you walking through this world covered in the dust of and hanging on the words of Messiah Rabbeinu – or are you just clinging to a belief system that offers an escape to Heaven in His Name?
4. Are you walking daily in His Footsteps, wherever He leads – or are you going your own way, doing what seems right or expedient in your own eyes, and relying on His atoning sacrifice for theological justification?
5. Are you becoming more and more like the Master day by day through embracing both the words of His Mouth and the fellowship of His sufferings – or are you just identifying with a label like Christian, Jew, Karaite, Messianic, Natzarim, H.R., or T.O.?
6. Are you a *Torah Footprint person*?
7. Is your family a *Torah Footprint family*?
8. Do you and your family, like the individuals and families that had gathered before Moshe on the plain to hear his final discourses on that plain, stand poised on the edge of destiny?
9. Do you get the sense that your entire life focus is about to change with the next series of steps you take?
10. In your spirit are you hearing a Divine call to ***Arise! Take up your journey afresh?***
11. Do you somehow intuitively know that you are about to get the opportunity to participate in the Grand Redemptive Plan of the Holy One in a way - and at a level – that you have never experienced or even knew existed before?

If you are beginning to sense the imminence of a powerful season of renewal, you are by no means alone. And if you are not feeling all these things quite yet, do not lose heart. It is not yet *Elul*. And Moshe has had so much prophetic insight, passion and wisdom deposited in him that both revelation and passion will continue to pour out of him for quite a while yet.

Arise! Take Up Your Journey Afresh!

The Holy One knows exactly where you are – and how you got there. He knows absolutely everything there is to know about the *state of your heart* as well as *every last intimate detail of your life*. He knows the thoughts of your mind before you think them. He knows the attitudes of your heart before you feel them. He knows the words that will issue forth from your mouth even before they form on your

tongue.

The Holy One knows exactly what *frightens you about the mission* to which you are being called. He knows what the enemy has sown in you to *distract you away from the destiny* for which you were created. He knows what it takes to *get your attention*. He knows what it takes to *heal you*. He knows what it takes to *humble you*, to *awe you*, to *inspire you*, to *refresh you*, and to *motivate you*. He knows very well and is fiercely jealous of absolutely everything of this world that hinders you from receiving and requiting His healing, transforming, empowering love.

The Bridegroom-King is not playing coy with us. He is laying it all on the line. He has made the conquest of our hearts His most important challenge in this age. He is 100% committed to doing whatever is necessary to sweep us off of our feet and into His gentlemanly embrace. He is determined to outshine every other suitor with so much brightness that lesser lovers will become to us as *unsatisfying as cardboard* and as *unappetizing as barnyard flies*. He is not about to give up on the great quest He has begun to woo us away from the world. He will never relent in his efforts to win our ecstatic - and exclusive - love. So what does He want from us in return? What is His strategic objective vis-à-vis our lives? What is His ‘endgame’? Why is He investing so much time and energy and passion and expending so many Heavenly resources to woo the likes of you and me? This much we know: the Holy One is not demanding great exploits or sacrifices from us. He does not need or depend upon us. He is vastly more powerful, wise, and resourceful than that. But He does have a wildly creative – indeed radical - plan in which He has chosen you and I to play a part. And He does want some kind of sign from us – pretty soon - that we at least are beginning to requite His love. He does expect – and deserve – to see some evidence that we are experiencing the humble beginnings of desire to participate with Him in that wildly creative plan He has percolating in the recesses of His Brilliant Mind.

We will talk about exactly what kind of sign – and commitment - the Holy One wants from you at this point in your journey later. We will also speak at length about the role He wants us to play in His Grand Redemptive Plan. Before we get to those things however we need to put to work the precious *gift of memory* about which we spoke yesterday. What the Bridegroom-King wants from you and me today, requires us to know what He has done for us to get us to the place we presently stand – here on the edge of destiny, poised and ready to become the long-awaited *Footprint People* of the Most High.

Critical Matters of Remembrance Affecting Our Mission

The first critical matters of remembrance we need to bring to the forefront of our

minds and focus intently upon before learning exactly what the Creator of Heaven and Earth wants from us are: [1] the *tablets of the testimony* He gave us at Sinai; [2] the *Precious Words of Betrothal* the Holy One inscribed on those Tablets with His own Finger, and [3] the holy ark in which the Bridegroom-King's tablets of testimony are preserved.

The Two Tablets [in Hebrew *sh'nei luchot*] were what He chose to give to us, His Betrothed Bride-to-be, as a betrothal gift. The *Ten Beautiful Words of Betrothal He spoke over us at Sinai* were His prophetic declaration of *how He sees us*, of *what He created us to be and do*, and *the kind of beauty He was committing Himself to bring forth from us*. The beautiful ark of acacia wood, replete with the stunning mercy seat upon which He has promised to sit enthroned in our midst, was our greatest personal and national treasure chest – by far our most valuable individual and collective asset. These are indeed three precious, precious things. Did you know that keeping these three things in constant remembrance – *i.e.* actively *in the forefront of your mind through meditation, speaking, teaching, and inscribing* - is essential to understanding what the Holy One our God wants from and expects of us? Well it is.

Think of the Messianic implications of the *two sets of tablets* which were presented forty days apart at Sinai. These two separate sets of tablets relate to and describe the two *appearances of Messiah*. The first set of tablets is violently destroyed before its Divine Origin and true message can be revealed, just as the first appearance of Messiah results in his death before His Divine Origin and true message are understood. After a Divinely ordained interval of time the second set of tablets, this one indestructible, is then provided, and the contents thereof are taught first to Israel, then to the nations of the world; similarly, the second appearance of Messiah, this time as Creator-King, will reveal him as Eternal, as Omnipotent, and as the Benevolent and Wise Ruler before Whom all people of all nations, tribes and tongues will bow in stunned and reverent awe.

Think as well of the Messianic implications of the Ten Words of Betrothal which were inscribed upon the Tablets by the *Finger* of the Holy One. These ten words are *the Ten Fundamental Articles of the Constitution of the Kingdom over which the Messiah will reign*. Moshe therefore reminds us that after the disgusting display of unfaithfulness to Covenant which culminated in the golden calf debacle the Holy One appeared to him again, and said:

***Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first,
and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of shittim wood.
Then I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets,
which you shattered; and you will put them in the ark.***

[Deuteronomy 10:1]

Moshe then reminds us that in response to this directive he supervised the construction of the ark of the Covenant, then hewed out two tablets of stone, and faithfully trekked back up the mountain to meet with the Holy One once again. Once he got there the Holy One:

... *wrote on the tablets according to the first writing,
the Aserot Ha-Dibrot [i.e. Ten Words] which the Holy One had spoken to you
in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly;
and the Holy One gave them to me.*
*Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark I had made;
and there they are, just as the Holy One commanded me.*

[Deuteronomy 10:4-5]

Why are these particular remembrances so mission-critical? Because before we consider what it is the Holy One wants and expects from us, we need to have an understanding of both [1] *the amazing amount of spiritual potential our Bridegroom sees in us* and [2] *the fact that when we do not fulfill the potential He sees in us through His eyes of love, He has established a mercy seat to which we can appeal for both forgiveness and redemption.* If we do not keep *the nature of the Covenant as one of tender and intimate Betrothal* ever in mind, and if we do not keep the beautiful spectacle of the mercy seat ever in view, you see, we will miss the substance of what Moshe is trying to teach us. We will find ourselves turning our Bridegroom-King's precious words of love into a set of 'laws' we convince ourselves we have to 'obey' to earn His favor and merit a place in the World to Come.

The second critical matter of remembrance Moshe seeks to bring to the forefront of our minds and cause us to focus intently upon before he tells us exactly what the Creator of Heaven and Earth wants from us is how the Holy One has led us lovingly, and provided for our every need faithfully, all along the way. Moshe wants us to understand that the Bridegroom-King has done this, and has committed to continue to do this, *despite us not by any means being over the lingering sin issues* that resulted in our fathers dying out in the wilderness rather than entering the King's bridal chamber.

Our Bridegroom-King has never once left us or forsaken us – even when we most definitely deserved to have been forsaken. Leaders – like Aharon and the heads of the Levitical clans – have come and gone; but *our Divine Bridegroom is still here* for us. And it will always be so. Now that we have this confidence, it is time for Moshe to tell us what we clamor to hear – *i.e. exactly what it is that the Holy One requires of us His people.*

What Is It That the Holy One Wants From You and Me?

Do you wonder sometimes what it is exactly that the Creator of Heaven and Earth *wants from you* going forward? You will find out in today's aliyah. Moshe really *wants you* to know. And you really *need* to know. So open your eyes, your ears, your hearts, and your spirits, Dear Reader, and *sh'ma*. This is the word of the Holy One for all of us:

*Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require² of you,
but to **fear the Holy One your God**³,
to **walk in all his ways**⁴, and to **love him**, and to **serve the Holy One your God**⁵
with all your heart and with all your soul,
to **keep the mitzvot** of the Holy One⁶, **and His statutes**,
with which I instruct you this day for your good?*

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart⁷, and **be no more stiff-necked**.

*For the Holy One your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords,
the great God, the mighty, and the awesome, who doesn't regard persons, nor takes reward.*

*He executes justice for the fatherless and widow,
and loves the foreigner, in giving him food and clothing.*

*Therefore **love**⁸ **the foreigner** [Hebrew *ha-ger*];
for you were foreigners [*ger'im*] in the land of Mitzrayim.*

Reverence⁹ **the Holy One your God**;
Serve¹⁰ **Him**; and **cleave**¹¹ **to him**, and **in His name**

² The word English Bibles translate as “require” is *sha'al, shin, alef, lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #7592, pronounced *shaw-al'*. The Hebraic word picture is that of a prospective buyer seeking something from a prospective seller, or a prospective borrower seeking something from a prospective lender.

³ In Hebrew “*ki im-l'yir'ah et-Adonai Eloheicha*”.

⁴ In Hebrew the instruction is “*l'lechet b'chol-d'rachav*”.

⁵ In Hebrew “*vela'avod et-Adonai Eloheicha*”.

⁶ In Hebrew, “*L'sh'mor et-mitzvot Adonai*”.

⁷ This is the literal translation from the Hebrew. It is considered an idiomatic expression meaning: “*remove the self-protective barriers you have placed around your heart.*”

⁸ The verb our English Bibles translate as “love” in this verse is *ahav*, Strong's Hebrew word #157, *alef, hey, beit*, pronounced *aw-hawv'*. The first Biblical usage of this word is in Genesis 22, where the Holy One challenges Avraham concerning Yitzchak:

*Take now your son, your only [son] Yitzchak, whom you love,
and go into the land of Moriyah; and approach Me there with Him as an olah surrogate*

It is also the verb used in Genesis 24:67 to describe how Yitzchak related to his wife Rivkah:

*And Yitzchak brought her into his mother Sarah's tent,
and took Rivkah, and she became his wife; and he loved [Hebrew, *ahav*] her:
and Yitzchak was comforted after his mother's [death].*

⁹ The verb our English Bibles translate as “reverence” or “fear” is *yare, yod, resh, alef*, Strong's Hebrew word # 3372, pronounced *yaw-ray*. Its first Biblical usage is in Genesis 3:10, to describe Adam's motivation for hiding from God after the Fall: “... *he said, I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid* [*yare*], *because I was naked; and I hid myself.*”

¹⁰ The verb our English Bibles translate as “serve” in this context is *abad', ayin, beit, dalet*, Strong's #H5647, pronounced *aw-bawd'*. It is first used in Genesis 2:5 and 2:15, to describe the work or service the Holy One appointed to Adam in the garden, before the Fall – to “*till the earth*”, and to “*dress and keep*” the garden. The same verb is also used to describe what Ya'akov [Jacob] agreed to do for Lavan [Laban] for seven years [ultimately, more than 20], as the bride price of Rachel. See **Genesis 29:18**.

[i.e. in a manner consistent with His Character, Attributes, Essential Nature, and Declared Will]

make all your declarations.

[Deuteronomy 10:2-21]

The Bridegroom Is Calling for a Bride!

There it is, Dear Reader. The Holy One does not demand from us great exploits. He does not require us to dazzle him – or the world - with miraculous works. Nor does He tell us to establish of great and powerful ministry organizations. He does not expect perfection. Nor does He require us to produce our own salvation - or that of those around us. What He wants is for us to spend the time, energy, and passion necessary to get *know* Him intimately. He wants us to be humble and teachable enough to *understand and appreciate* His revealed pattern of righteousness¹². And He because we know Him, and fully trust His goodness and wisdom, He wants us to voluntarily yield our wills, our minds, our emotions, our words, and our actions to His Will and His Ways – and to keep doing it, in real time, day after day, challenge after challenge, situation after situation.

What the Holy One really wants from us is not good doctrine. Neither is it lip service. Neither is it mechanical following of tradition or some religion’s halakah. What Our Covenant Partner really wants from us is not about even about what most people – especially in religious circles – think of as ‘*ministry*’. What He wants from us instead is *intimate communion, sweet bridal surrender, and whole-hearted embracing of a lifestyle of 24/7/365 Divine Apprenticeship*. He wants us to take the “*Nestea Plunge*”¹³ into – and become completely immersed in – His Beautiful Persona. He wants us to gradually become more and more like Him – in thought, in motive, in emotion, in love, in word, and in deed. Let’s look at how this process is designed to shake out.

Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require of you, but:

1.

... Im-l'yir'ah et-Adonai Eloheicha [To Fear the Holy One Your God]

The life, destiny, and purpose which the Holy One has planned for and desires of us all begins with *yirat Adonai* – maintaining a constant state of *awe* and *humility*

¹¹ The verb our English Bibles translate as “cleave to” in Deuteronomy 10:21 is *dabaq, dalet, beit, kuf*, Strong’s Hebrew word #1692, pronounced *daw-bawk*’. It is first used in Genesis 2:24 to describe *how a man shall be united with his wife*.

¹² The Holy One’s revealed pattern or righteousness is the Torah, as taught by Moshe and as modeled by Yeshua.

¹³ *Nestea*® is the brand name of an ‘instant tea’ product which at one time advertised on television by showing a man or woman stopping hard physical labor to drink a glass of *the refreshing iced beverage*. As the man or woman received the glass they were pictured standing with their back to a swimming pool. As they began to drink the *Nestea* product they relaxed and leaned back, falling straightway backward into the cool, refreshing water of the swimming pool. The announcer then gave the invitation to all to “take the *Nestea* plunge”.

and *gratitude* and *expectation of the miraculous* in relation to the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven.

I remember seeing bumper stickers fairly regularly a few years ago that said ‘*God is my co-pilot*’. I used to smile in agreement when I would see a bumper sticker like that. Now that I am older and wiser however I absolutely shudder at the thought. That way of thinking is the opposite of *yirat Adonai*. That way of thinking places the human actor in the pilot’s seat and relegates the Holy One to the role of a servant or assistant – an underling. The reality of the matter is that the Creator of the Universe is not *anybody’s co-pilot*. He is *THE PILOT*, the Pilot of all pilots - and the *Owner of all airlines* for that matter. The Holy One of Israel does not serve *us* – we get the privilege of serving *Him*. And if He allows *us* to sit in the co-pilot’s chair every once in a while, it is not because we deserve that privilege – it is solely because He wants to show the world that He can make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.

Today’s secular culture prides itself on ‘*irreverent humor*’ – jokes, one-liners, and sarcasms that poke fun at subjects that used to be considered ‘off color’, and off-limits for decent conversation. From Monty Python to Woody Allen to Saturday Night Live to Richard Pryor to Jerry Seinfeld to *Achmed the Dead Terrorist*, and far, far beyond, the entertainment industry has infected our society with an *epidemic of irreverence*. But the Holy One is calling forth a people who will stop laughing at the crude jokes, stop snickering at the sarcasms, and stop rolling their eyes at the prophets He sends our way, hear a different drummer, and take up a totally different refrain – the refrain of the *Serafim*. In case you’ve forgotten, Beloved, it goes something like this: ***Holy, Holy, Holy is the Holy One, God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.***

That is *yirat Adonai* [i.e. the fear/reverence of God]. And believe it or not, *yirat Adonai* really is what the Bible says it is - the *beginning point of knowledge*.

Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require¹⁴ of you, but:

2.

... l'lechet b'chol-d'rachav [to walk in all His Ways]

Yirat Adonai will naturally lead us to *long for* and *continually pursue and follow after* the Divine Bridegroom, thereby *going where He goes* [i.e. to walk in His ways]. We will want to *be near Him*. And we will want to *do whatever He is doing*. Picture a man and his little boy out in the yard. See the father pushing the lawnmower. Now look at the little boy, a few feet behind his father, pushing a toy

¹⁴ The word our English Bibles translate as “require” is *sha'al, shin, alef, lamed*, Strong’s Hebrew word #7592, pronounced *shaw-al'*. The Hebraic word picture is that of a prospective buyer seeking something from a prospective seller, or a prospective borrower seeking something from a prospective lender.

lawnmower, emulating his dad. When the man turns to the right, the little boy turns to the right. When the man turns to the left, his son turns to the left. When the man stops and wipes his brow, the son stops and wipes his brow. Why does virtually every little boy do something like that? Because he thinks his dad knows everything, and he wants to be just like him. And so, the little boy walks in all his father's ways.

Be like that little child, Dear One. Walk in your Father's ways. Walk in *all* of them. Those of you who have studied the life of our forefather Avraham know what I mean.

Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require of you, but:

3.

... *ul'ahavah oto* [*And to love Him*]

Walking in all the Holy One's ways means that when opportunities arise, as they inevitably do in life, to *sh'ma* other voices than the Holy One's, and follow other paths than the ones He is treading, we will *consciously choose the Divine Bridegroom's Voice and His Paths over the others*. This is the essence of *ahavat Adonai* – usually translated '*you are to love the Holy One*'.

Why would or should we choose the Holy One's ways when other ways *look* like they would be more appealing – at least in the short term? Why would or should we choose to keep moving along the Holy One's paths even when we are tired, or hungry, or lonely, or sick, or wounded, bereaved, or terrorized? Ahhh, now it becomes clearer – this question is the very reason the '*bridegroom paradigm*' is such an important spiritual reality for us to embrace. Our engagement with His beautiful Torah cannot be a matter of mere intellectual assent, or theological belief; it has to be a matter of deep, abiding *bridal passion*.

It all has to do with and flow from *ahav* – that Hebrew word we translate into English as 'love'. *Ahav* is, however, much, much more than mere affection or attraction or infatuation or anything else our secular society defines as love. To *ahavah oto* [love Him] means more than just to think He is 'hot'. *Ahav*, you see, is a *covenant* term. It is a *forever word*. You don't *ahav* something for a while and then get over it or grow out of it. It becomes a part of who you are. It shapes your personality.

Ahavah oto means to respond to Him as a Bride responds to her Bridegroom – to consciously choose Him over all others, and to hang on every word He says, to give herself totally to Him, and to strive to become and be everything He expects and deserves in a Bride. *Ahavah oto* [to 'love' Him] has nothing to do with how He makes you *feel*. *Ahavah oto* is about joyfully surrendering to His every desire, and

choosing His will over your own every time.

Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require of you, but:

4.

... l'avod et-Adonai Eloheicha [to serve the Holy One Your God]

When we follow in the Divine Bridegroom's Ways and commit ourselves to choose His will over ours every time, we will find ourselves given ever-increasing levels of responsibility to work with Him in doing whatever He is doing. For you to accept His assignments, and do your best to execute them, is ***l'avod et-Adonai Eloheicha*** - to serve the Holy One Your God.

In all of this, however, keep in mind that *He is the Master* and that *you are merely His beloved apprentice*. You may get to do some of the labor, but all projects to which you are assigned always remain *His* projects, on which you are merely given a chance to use *His tools*, under *His watchful eye and supervision*, following *His example*. Keep in mind that it is always *His skill* and *His understanding* and attention to detail – not yours - that will make whatever little thing He allows you to do become meaningful. Yeshua modeled this for us. He said He only did *what He saw the Father doing*. **Yochanan [John] 5:19**. Let the implications of that sink into your head for a few minutes. Yeshua did not engage in ministry *for ministry's sake*. He did not try to disciple every Israelite – much less human beings at random. He did not confront every hypocrite He encountered. He did not raise from the dead every person who died. He did not lay His Hands on and heal every sick person he encountered. Why? Because Yeshua was teaching us – modeling for us – what it truly means to *avad Adonai* – doing *only those things the Holy One specifically allocates to us the responsibility to do*. He was teaching us that there is a big difference – indeed a chasm – between being a ‘do-gooder’, or social reformer, or philanthropist, and *avodat Adonai*.

We are not to ‘do good’ according to our – or our society's - definition of good. That is one of the Serpent's oldest deceptions. It brings with it the twin character assassins *pride* and the *praise of men*. We are to do *only what the Holy One tells us to do*. The Holy One is not our servant, required to bless whatever we do. We are *His* servant, required to do whatever *He tells us ... and nothing else* whatever.

Now, Yisra'el, what does the Holy One your God require of you, but:

5.

... lish'mor et-mitzvot Adonai

v'et-chukotav asher anochi metzaveicha hayom l'tov lach

[to keep all the commandments of the Holy One and the ordinances
which I am engraving upon you today for your own good]

As a Bride-to-be we are expected to become of like mind with our Bridegroom. He gives us the precious gifts Torah calls *mitzvot* and *chukot* to teach us how to do

just that. Often called ‘commandments’ in English translations, the Hebrew term *mitzvot* literally refers to acts through which the Divine Bridegroom calls us to *join ourselves to Him* and to *like an apprentice do whatever we see Him doing*. *Mitzvot* draw us close to Him, bring us under His close personal tutelage, and teach us to co-create with Him. The *mitzvot* of Torah thereby offer the perfect vehicle to test *the extent to which we are learning to love the Divine Bridegroom with all our hearts*.

Often called ‘ordinances’ or ‘statutes’ in English translations of Torah, *chukim* are literally *engravings* – i.e. those things which *just are* instructed to be done - whether they make sense to us or make us feel close to Him or not. Imagine a sticky note being left by a newly married husband for his new bride on the refrigerator door, saying ‘*Meet me at the park at 2:00 p.m.*’ That is a *chuk*. The wife does not know why she is supposed to go to the park, or what is going to happen when she gets there. She does not understand; but she goes anyway because she both *loves her husband* and *trusts him to have something good in mind for her*. That is the way the *chukim* of Torah work. They test the extent to which we love the Divine Bridegroom with all our might.

What are we expected to do with the Bridegroom’s *mitzvot* and *chukot*? Our English Bibles tell us we are expected to *keep* them. The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as “keep” is *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. We are expected to make the Bridegroom’s words of instruction for life in His Household our most precious, prized, and cherished possession, and to keep diligent watch over them to make sure no one and no circumstances robs them of their meaning or us of the full blessing of their application.

The Need to Know

And so if you are finding it hard to walk with the Holy One, walk out His will for your life, and continually do only what you see Him doing, consider that it may just be that the reason you are having this difficulty is probably because you still have one or more of the following problems:

1. You still do not *know* Him very well;
2. You still do not like Him very much; or
3. You still do not trust Him to have your best interest in mind at all times.

If you do not really *know* the Bridegroom, you see, you have to *guess* at what He wants. You have to guess what He is thinking. You have to guess what He is doing. You have to guess what brings Him pleasure. Such guessing is really, really hard work. Such guessing is what makes legalists out of some people – and causes

others to build and defend golden calf religious systems.

The Holy One does not want us to guess what He delights in, what He thinks, how He feels, what He is doing, or what He wants from us. He wants us to *know*. In today's aliyah therefore He has Moshe remind us how he came to know [Hebrew *yada*] the Holy One and to understand [Hebrew *da'at*] His ways. What method did the Holy One use with Moshe? For starters, how about 40 days and nights on the Mountain, in His Presence – on two separate occasions?

Around the World [to Come] in 80 Days

Moshe takes us back to Mount Sinai and tells us that, after the debacle of the sin of the golden calf the Holy One called him back up the mountain. He went. And while there He received the Torah directly from the Holy One a second time. He says of this event:

As at the first time, I stayed on the mountain, forty days and forty nights

[Deuteronomy 10:10]

Imagine! 80 days totally immersed in the Presence of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov! 80 days at the Creator's feet, being transformed by His Breath. 80 days listening to the Holy One's Voice, discussing with the Holy One His dealings with Creation, with the patriarchs, with Pharaoh. 80 days feeling the Holy One's emotions, studying His every movement, soaking up His Presence, absorbing His Essence. 80 days respectfully questioning everything, and having his questions answered by the only Source that matters. And yet one cannot read Moshe's words and not catch a sense *that though Moshe had spent 80 days in such a state of spiritual elevation, Moshe was still a man very much like you and me*. Despite 80 days in private audience with the Holy One he did not claim to know everything about the Holy One - but he did declare that which He *knew*.

But Where Does that Leave Us?

Does it take 80 days on a mountain afire with the *Radiant Cloud of His Manifest Presence* to know the Holy One? No. Moreover, could a man learn all there is to know about the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov in 800 – or 8,000 – or 800 million - days on a trembling mountain? No. But that is okay – after all, the Holy One did not call us to be “know-it-all's”. He just called us to be passionate *seekers* – searching and seeking, and questioning and pursuing Him forever. He called us to a *marvelous quest*. He called us to a great *adventure*. And what is more the Holy One has promised that He will make Himself accessible to all of those who seek Him with all their heart. He has sent Messiah Yeshua to demonstrate His ways and His values and the lifestyle of Torah as it was intended for man. He has sent forth the *Ruach HaQodesh* [Holy Spirit] to teach each believing, seeking soul about Him, about Messiah, about what is sin and what is

righteousness, and about the inevitability of judgment.

Yet the Holy One has also shown us, as He showed Moshe, that He is so vast, so deep, and so full of surprises, and that His Glory is so multi-faceted, that though we seek Him, and walk with Him, for eternity, we will never grow bored, nor completely familiar, with Him. He will always challenge us to *go deeper*. He will always offer us more revelation of Him. And in that continuing, progressive revelation of Who He Is, who we are, and why we are here, we find meaning and purpose in life.

We may never spend 80 days and nights on a mountain, or 40 years in a desert, communing face-to-face with the Divine Bridegroom the way Moshe did, Beloved. *Selah!* But what we can do is spend the rest of our lives – in this world and in the World to Come – getting to know the Holy One better and better every minute of every day. Take the *Nestea plunge*. Fall hard. Drink deep.

Behold: The Transcenders Are Arising!

Inherent in the organizational structure and leadership hierarchy of every organization – be that organization governmental, political, ideological, commercial, social or religious in focus - is a fear of and hatred toward the kind of person I call the TRANSCENDER. What is a TRANSCENDER? A TRANSCENDER is a zealous pursuer of God. A TRANSCENDER is one whose primary allegiance is to the Divine Bridegroom rather than to the organization and its leaders. Avraham was a TRANSCENDER. Yosef was a TRANSCENDER. David was a TRANSCENDER. Yochanan the Immerser was a TRANSCENDER. So let's look a little deeper at the concept, shall we. After all, you may just be called to be a TRANSCENDER too. A TRANSCENDER is not a 'rebel'. The TRANSCENDER respects, is willing to learn from, and is quick to accord honor to all people who speak or minister in the Name of the Holy One¹⁵ - but he/she is never, for long at least, going to remain dependent upon such people. And when the TRANSCENDER transcends – *i.e.* goes beyond the titled leadership in any small particular – the natural response of the leader and his cadre is to declare the TRANSCENDER to be a *radical*, a *heretic*, a *maverick*, a *rebel*, or some other form of *persona non gratis*.

I dare say that the Holy One has made it this way on purpose – lest the people who are supposed to worship Him, and draw their strength from Him, begin to worship and draw their strength from titled leaders and their offices instead of from Him. The TRANSCENDER, taught directly by the True Rabbi, you see, is always going

¹⁵A rebel can never be a TRANSCENDER. Many people just have 'authority issues' – they envy, and therefore challenge, anyone who would try to teach, lead, or motivate them. Such people are not TRANSCENDERS.

to be misunderstood and viewed as a *threat* to any and every political, social, and religious organization – especially to that organization’s leaders. Because he/she has a stronger allegiance to the Holy One than to the religious organization or to any leader the TRANSCENDER will never ‘just do what he/she is told’. He will never just accept what any leader says without first [a] testing it against the gold standard of Torah and [b] discussing it intimately with the Bridegroom-King Himself.

We are not supposed to expect – or crave – *gratitude* from men. We are not supposed to seek – or accept - *recognition, promotion, or appreciation* from organizations. We are not supposed to look to men or organizations of any kind to make us feel *understood, or liked, or supported*. Messiah taught us:

*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.
Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves.*

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you. Yes, and you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Goyim.

*Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child.
Children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.*

*You will be hated by all men for my name's sake,
but he who endures to the end will be saved.
When they persecute you in one city, flee into another ...*

[Matthew 10:16-23]

Be gentle. Be kind. But also be *wise*. The Bridegroom-King and His Kingdom are worth it all, and a thousand times over!

Questions For Today’s Study

1. How many times did Moshe spend 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai in the Presence and the Glory of the Holy One?
2. For what four things did God set apart the Tribe of Levi according to Deuteronomy 10:8?
3. What was to be the inheritance of the Tribe of Levi? How does this relate to Ya’akov’s [Jacob’s] prophecy in Genesis 49:5-7?
4. In Deuteronomy 10:12-13 Moshe tells the Redeemed that the Holy One “requires” *four things* of them.

[A] In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the word our English Bibles translate as “requires” [Strong’s Hebrew word # 7592]. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew letters with vowel points. Then describe the Hebraic word picture

that you see developing as you search out the meaning of this verb. Before answering, see the first two usages of this word in Scripture – Genesis 24:47, 57.

[B] What are the four things that God “requires”? Make a list of the four things, then explain what each listed thing means to you.

5. In Deuteronomy 10:17-18 Moshe attempts to describe to the Redeemed Community a small part of *the nature and character and grandeur of God*, as he has come to know Him through his life experiences. Make a list the various characteristics and attributes Moshe gives about God in these verses.

6. We in the Redeemed Community are told to show *love* to foreigners.

[A] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the Hebrew verb translated as “love” in this instruction. Write the Hebrew verb in Hebrew consonants, with appropriate vowel markings, and in its English transliteration. Then, describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around this verb.

[B] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the Hebrew noun translated as “foreigners/strangers” in this instruction. Look up as well the verb root of this noun. Write the Hebrew noun and its verb root in Hebrew consonants, with appropriate vowel markings, and in their English transliteration. Then, describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around the noun and its verb root.

[C] How do you think Torah’s instruction to love foreigners relates to Yeshua’s instruction to *love your enemies* [Matthew 6:44-47].

7. Our haftarah aliyah today is from Isaiah 50. Yeshayahu begins by prophetically declaring the Holy One’s words, as follows:

*Thus says the Holy One, “Where is the bill of your mother's divorce,
with which I have put her away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

*Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, and for your transgressions
your mother was put away.*

Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?

Is my hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?

*Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness:
their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst.*

I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

At this point Yeshayahu interrupts his prophecy to speak in his own name, declaring in his own words [as the *Ruach* inspired] what the Holy One does for those in covenant with Him.

*The Holy One GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with words him who is weary:
morning by morning, he wakens my ear,*

*yes, he wakens my ear to sh'ma as those who are taught.*¹⁶

*The Holy One GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward.
I gave my back to the strikers, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair;
I didn't hide my face from shame and spitting.*

*For the Holy One GOD will help me; therefore I have not been confounded:
therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be disappointed.*

*He is near who justifies me;
who will bring charges against me? Let us stand up together.*

Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

*Behold, the Holy One GOD will help me. Who is he who shall condemn me?
Behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up.*

[A] In Isaiah 50:1 the prophet says Israel's *transgressions* have caused her mother to be "put away", and Israel's *iniquities* have caused her to "be sold". Using Strong's Concordance and your Gesenius' Lexicon, describe on your paper the Hebraic word picture produced by the words "transgressions" [Heb. Word # 6588] and "iniquities" [Heb. Word # 5771].

[B] What does Yeshayahu [Isaiah] mean in verse 2 when he says [on behalf of the Holy One] that there was "no man"/"none to answer"? [Hint: Look at Genesis 18:22-32; Jeremiah 5:1 (Ampl.); Jeremiah 8:6 (Ampl.); Hosea 11:7 (Ampl.), John 3:19].

8. Regarding today's reading from the apostolic letter of Shaul of Tarsus to the Romans, which consists of a quotation from a Psalm:

[A] Read in its entirety the Psalm from which Shaul quotes, and based upon your reading, write what thoughts you believe a Jewish boy or girl who knew that Psalm might have thought as they were being herded into a gas chamber by Nazi soldiers in World War II.

[B] This is one of those few passages of the apostolic scriptures where we know for certain the intended Hebrew words behind the Greek text, because they are direct translations from the TaNaKh. Let's take advantage of this. In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words which our English Bibles translate [in Psalm 44] as "killed", "accounted", "sheep", and "slaughter". Write each Hebrew word and (if applicable, its verb root). Then review the other usages of the word and its verb root in the TaNaKh, as set out in Strong's, and review Gesenius' notes about the words as well. Conclude the exercise by describing the Hebraic word picture you are seeing with regard to each of the words in question.

¹⁶ This is the source for the oft-repeated statement in the apostolic scriptures *He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.*

*May you take note of the blessings He has poured out upon you,
and that He is the source of all good things;
and may you not ever waste any true passion on the vain pursuits of this world.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:10-13

Mercy¹⁷ and truth¹⁸ meet¹⁹ together.

Righteousness and shalom have kissed each other.

Truth springs out of the eretz. Righteousness has looked down from heaven.

Yes, the Holy One will give that which is good. Our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

¹⁷ The Hebrew word is *chesed*, *chet*, *samech*, *dalet*, Strong's Hebrew word #2617, pronounced *kkeh'-sed*. Its first usage in Torah is in the thanksgiving speech of Lot, who attributes his deliverance from S'dom as the Holy One's *chesed*. Genesis 19:9. *Chesed* is a covenant term referring to the deeds of kindness a faithful covenant partner does for the other above and beyond the literal terms of the covenant, in support of the relationship. See e.g. Genesis 20:13, where Sarah agreed, out of *chesed*, and in addition to her covenant commitment to be a faithful wife to Avram, to pose as his sister when they traveled into a foreign land, in order that he will not be killed by men desiring her for a wife]. *Chesed* is thus one of the wonderful benefits of a covenant relationship – a bonus, so to speak, over what one has bargained for.

¹⁸ The Hebrew word translated as truth in this passage is *emet*, *alef*, *mem*, *tav*, Strong's Hebrew word #571. This word means *covenant faithfulness*. It means the fulfilling of a promise *to the letter* – making one's *conduct* match one's *words*. *Chesed* is above and beyond *emet* - something done for a covenant partner not because it is required by any specific term of the covenant, but solely in order to further the relationship between the covenant partners and make the covenant stronger.

¹⁹ The Hebrew verb translated as "meet together" in this passage is *pagash*, *peh*, *gimel*, *shin*, Strong's Hebrew word #6298, pronounced *paw-gawsh'*. It means to meet face-to-face, as two travelers meet each other on a narrow path. See e.g. Genesis 32:17 [Ya'akov's meeting with Esav]. It *can* mean *confront*, or to *join up with*, or just to 'bump into', depending upon the context.