

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Ekev:** **Deuteronomy 7:12-26**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 49:14-16**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 8:31-32**

You will be blessed above all peoples.

[Deuteronomy 7:14]

Today's *Ekev* Meditation is Psalm 85:1-3;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Third Blessing, Kadosh* [Holiness]

Vehayah ekev - It will happen, on the heels of ... *tishme'un et-ha-mishpatim ha-eleh* – your [corporately] turning your ear to, paying attention to, listening to, hearing, and living in harmony with these decrees of right/excellent response ... *ushmartem va'asitem otam* - and cherishing/treasuring/keeping and building/doing/implementing them **Deuteronomy 7:12a.**

The Hebrew word *ekev* – which is the second word found in the Hebrew text of this week's parsha - is difficult to translate. It literally refers to *the heel of a foot*. If you want to understand what it means in the context of the parsha, think of a dog that has been trained to 'heel'. A 'heel' directive from the Master tells the dog to immediately stop whatever it is doing, leave what it is sniffing, and go directly to the Master's side, standing with the center of his body in line with the Master's foot/heel. This is the verbal directive the Master uses when he wants the dog to [a] come to attention, [b] stop what it is doing or sniffing, return to the Master's presence, path, and pace, [c] cease wandering away (or pulling against the leash, if there is one); [d] go only when and where the Master goes (let the Master choose the course and pace instead of the animal); and [e] stop only when and where the Master stops.

Well, perhaps now you get it: we are the dog; the Holy One is the Master. And His message for us in this season is 'heel'. This is not a time to indulge distractions. This is not a time to yield to temptation. This is not a time to be sniffing around the food bowls, the slop-piles, or the garbage cans of, others of our species. This is not a time for following the fleshly scent trails of those who came before us. The Master is here – and He is moving forward briskly, with a Kingdom mission, distinction, and *tikkun olam* assignment in mind. He is calling us to His side, to walk with Him. It is the week of *Ekev* – and it is time to 'Heel!'

Who Will 'Heel!' - and Who Will Not?

Ekev is, of course, the Hebrew word from which the name *Ya'akov*² [Jacob],

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meaning ‘*he will [use the] heel*, is derived. The use here in the Torah is a Hebrew idiom, a figurative way of saying “*on the heels of*”, which is an English idiom for ‘*following*’. It can also be translated *if, when, as* and *to the extent*. The word picture this family of words presents is something like the old “chicken and egg” debate – it is about the sequence and relationship of similar yet distinctive things. Which comes first, we might ask – is it *sh’ma*-ing the Holy One’s words? Or is it receiving the Holy One’s blessing? The answer is – BOTH! One comes *on the heels of* the other. The plowman overtakes the reaper. They represent two sides of the same coin.

The Ekev Factor – The Relationship of Sh’ma-ing and Blessing

Here is a rough translation of the prophetic download with which parsha *Ekev* begins:

*It will happen on the heels of you [corporately] listening for and to, hearing, and living in resonance with [Hebrew *sh’ma*] these decrees of right/excellent living³, and keeping/treasuring/cherishing/and faithfully watching over to preserve,
[Hebrew *sh’mar*] them
and do/fashion/shape/build/implement [Hebrew *asah*] them,
that the Holy One your God
will keep, treasure/cherish/and faithfully watch over to preserve, with you
*the Covenant and the lovingkindness He swore to your fathers.**

Here is the funny thing about the promises of the Holy One – they always come with, and are always subject to, conditions. The Holy One has an agenda, you see – a Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its Intended State of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and Shalom. He never deviates from that Plan – and the only reason He gives promises to men is to inspire them to partner with Him in that Plan in real ways, in real time. In order to access any promise the Holy One makes, the human beings who are the intended beneficiaries of that promise have to make some changes in their lives – changes of priority, changes of thought, changes of behavior, and changes of protocols of interaction with fellow man and with Creation. I call the conditions attached to the Holy One’s promises ‘*ekev*’ conditions. There always has been *ekev* conditions

² Ya’akov is spelled *yod, ayin, kuf, beit*.

³ The *KJV* translates the Hebrew word *mishpatim* as “*judgments*”. The Revised Standard and American Standard Versions both render the term “*ordinances*”. The NIV chooses the coldest and most impersonal term possible, “*laws*”. Of these poor alternatives of translation, the King James’ term “*judgments*” is clearly closest to the essence of the word, because it at least implies *a personal decision-making process, overseen by a compassionate, trustworthy arbiter/mediator who has no stake in the outcome and can thus be objective*. The other translations – ordinances and laws - imply an *impersonal* legislative process, not based upon relationship, but solely upon the pragmatism of *what advances the agenda of government*. But as preferable as it is to “ordinances” or “laws” the English word *judgments* still does not come close to describing or interpreting the Hebrew word *mishpatim*. In its Hebraic essence the word *mishpatim* refers to *the way the Holy One looks at things pertaining to ordinary aspects of human life - i.e. how He would handle certain situations if He were human*.

attached to the Holy One's blessings and promises. Consider Adam's *ekev* condition – *i.e.* His assignment to 'tend and keep' first the Garden, then the greater world [Genesis 2:15 and 3:23]. Consider Noach's 'ekev condition' – to build, stock, fill, tend, and inhabit an ark [Genesis 6:1-22]. Consider our father Avraham's first 'ekev condition' – *i.e.* to go out from his father's house, and his country, to a place the Holy One would show him [Genesis 12:1]. Consider also Avraham's second 'ekev condition' – *i.e.* to divide and guard the carcasses of the covenant [Genesis 15:9]; his third 'ekev condition' – *i.e.* to institute circumcision as a covenant sign [Genesis 17:10-11]; his fourth 'ekev condition' – *i.e.* to teach his household, and his family after him, to do 'righteousness' [tzedeq] and 'justice' [mishpat] [Genesis 18:19]; and his fifth 'ekev condition' – to take his son, his only son whom he loves, up to the mountain and present him as an *olah* (*i.e.* a freewill surrender surrogate) unto the Holy One [Genesis 22:19].

There always have been *ekev* conditions attached to the Holy One's promises, you see; and there always will be. All His dealings with mankind, you see, are conducted according to Covenant protocol. As participants in the great God/Man Covenant, we enjoy great privileges – but we are also assigned critically important responsibilities. We bask in abundant Covenant love and favor, and have access to all the special help, patience, and grace we need to make the most of that favor for the good of the world around us; but we also have serious and non-delegable obligations to 1. our Covenant Partner; 2. to our families, 3. To our fellows in the Covenant; and 4. to the nations. These *ekev* conditions – our part of the Covenant's functions - cannot be minimalized, much less written off, without serious consequences. The ultimate purpose of the Covenant, you see, is not that we receive a lot of wonderful promises and enjoy a lot of amazing blessings; the ultimate purpose of the Covenant is that we fulfill the *ekev* conditions – for it is in so doing that we co-labor with the Holy One in bringing forth His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its Intended State of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and *Shalom*.

The Cord of Three Strands That Holds All Things Together

The *ekev* conditions to the *bracha* promises to which Moshe will introduce us in this week's parsha will be threefold. First, we are to always *sh'ma* our Bridegroom-King's proactive instructions for living. Second, with the same passion and enthusiasm we *sh'ma* those proactive life instructions, we are to ***sh'mar*** [*i.e.* treasure, cherish, zealously guard and keep unadulterated and uncompromised] all His situation-specific decrees of right/excellent response. Finally, we are to ***asah*** [*i.e.* build into a Kingdom of Heaven Scented society that operates in real time, in the real world] both the Holy One's proactive instructions for living and His situation-specific decrees of right/excellent response. If, as, when, and to the extent we

engage in these three things, out of Bridal passion, the Holy One will do two things: 1. He will *sh'mar* with us the Covenant the Holy One made with our forefathers at Sinai, and 2. He will simultaneously *sh'mar* in the real-time events and circumstances of our lives the same lovingkindness – to the same degree, and for the same purposes – that He swore to them.

What does it mean for the Holy One to *sh'mar with us the covenant* He made with our forefathers? And what does it mean for Him *sh'mar 'the lovingkindness'* He swore to them? Moshe gets very specific about what these two phrases mean. First of all they mean that He will *do three primary things*: First, *He [i.e. the Holy One] will love us*. Second, He will *bless us*. And thirdly, He will *multiply us/expand our spheres of influence and zones of impact*.

Introducing – Then Expanding Upon - the 'Big Three'

I call this this combination of blessings promised by the Holy One 'the big three'. You will see what I mean in a moment. I need to tell you in advance however, lest you be lulled to sleep by religious predispositions and miss it, that the discussion of these three components of the Holy One's plan for His Beloved is *really, really, really good news!* In fact it is such good news that if we who worship the Holy One could just *get ahold of it* – and *let it get ahold of us* – we would never be the same. And indeed, *neither would the world*. To appropriate this good news however the reader needs to be at least willing to consider that the pathway of life laid out for us by the Holy One in Torah might just not be that burdensome pathway of works of the flesh doomed to end in frustration, failure, judgment, and death that institutional Christianity has for so long insisted that it was. To receive and walk in the really, really good news Moshe is about to deliver one must at least be willing to consider that the Holy One just might not be the legalistic, sadistic, overbearing control-freak of a Bridegroom the preachers and theologians of Christianity have so long portrayed Him as being. To be able to rejoice with this good news one must be at least willing to consider that maybe, just maybe, contrary to the assertions of Christian antinomians the Bridegroom of Heaven actually loves His chosen Bride-to-be passionately and wisely, and knows exactly what she is and is not capable of, and wants and will speak over only what is good for her.

I know it requires one to pause and consider some things. But do you really think the Holy One would ever send His Beloved down a pathway laced with pitfalls and landmines that He knows could destroy her? Not on your life. The pathways of life upon which our Divine Bridegroom invites His Beloved to walk hand-in Hand with Him are *paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake*, and *ways of pleasantness all of which lead to peace*. Psalm 23:3; Proverbs 3:17. Moshe has made

it clear, the Torah's instructions for living are to the Holy One's redeemed "*your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples.*" Deuteronomy 4:6.

Moshe is about to lay to rest the silly notion some have that the Holy One's purpose in giving us the Torah was to play a sadistic trick on His Bride-to-be that a future messiah would later come and undo. He wants all who have ears to hear to know that the purpose of the Torah is to establish the Bride of the Holy One on a good and holy pathway, to enable her to walk totally free from the world's influences, and to empower her to receive, embrace, walk in, and become a vessel of outpouring for His amazing **LOVE**, His extravagant **BLESSING**, and the **SUPERNATURAL MATHEMATICS OF ABUNDANT LIFE in His Presence.**

If you are willing to at least consider that there might actually be some validity to Moshe's premise let's dig a little deeper into the good news of Torah, shall we?

1. He will LOVE us

Moshe says that one of the things the Holy One will do concerning us if, when, and to the extent we *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* His instructions for living while on earth is to 'love us'. "*Blasphemy!*" I already hear some of my preacher acquaintances screaming. Next come the *clichés* – don't you know, they say, *that the Holy One 'so loved the world' and 'whosoever'* and all that. Be careful here. Before you get too indignant you might want to go back and read II Corinthians 9:7. That verse, written by Shaul of Tarsus, says that *God loves a cheerful giver*. How is this any less scandalous than saying the Holy One loves those who *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* the Torah? You see, Beloved, just because a verse of the Bible says the Holy One loves one group of persons who exhibit a particular attribute does that by any stretch of the imagination imply that He does not also love persons who fail to exhibit that attribute. Does II Corinthians 9:7 suggest that God does *not love* a stingy person? Does it imply to you that He does *not love* someone who gives grudgingly? Heaven forbid. So what does a verse like Deuteronomy 7:12 or II Corinthians 9:7 mean? Such a verse means merely that while the Holy One loves all human beings, and will never cease to love anyone, there is a unique and special kind and quality of love the Holy One feels for and delight the Holy One takes in those who trust Him enough to overcome fear concerning the future, matters of personal appetite and self-interest, and the religious tendency toward a critical and self-righteous spirit, and cheerfully give to others.

Similarly, when Torah tells us the Holy One will love those who *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* the life instructions He gave us through Moshe it is not saying He does not/will not love anyone else. All Torah is saying is that while the Holy One loves all men there is a unique and special kind and quality of love the Holy One feels

for and delight the Holy One takes in those who trust Him enough to overcome the appetites, desires, and limitations of the flesh, culture, science, and religion and make meeting Him through the life instructions He gave us through Moshe their chief joy and delight. Torah is talking about the specific kind and quality of love that the Holy One releases in abundance when His general, universal love begins to be requited and returned by a human being⁴. There is a level of Divine love, you see, that is too intimate and overwhelming to be released on those who want to walk their own way, do their own thing, and live their own lives. If for instance I showered upon a child who did not know me the kind and quality of love that I shower upon my own children they would simply not know how to handle it. They would not understand my heart. They would not understand my ways. They would not be able to even process, much less enjoy and respond appropriately to, demonstrations of love from me at that level.

It is the same way with the Holy One. He offers His love freely to all men. But He wisely reserves the fullness of the outpouring and manifestation of His great love for those who *show evidence of requiting and returning His love*. And that means those who think He is so wonderful and wise that they voluntarily choose to *sh'ma, sh'mar, and asah* His instructions for living to the greatest extent they can possibly do so, because they know He is good, they know He is wise, and because they know beyond a shadow of a doubt that His way is the way of ultimate true love.

What Manner of Love is This?

Man was created with a strong desire to be both *be loved* and to *release love* in response. That is because man was made in the image of the Holy One. The strong desire to be loved as well as the strong desire to release love are equally ingrained in the Holy One's nature. When I speak of love in the context of the Holy One's interactions with man, however, I am not talking about Greek forms of love such as C.S. Lewis wrote about as *storge, eros, phileo* or even *agape*. I am talking about a deeper kind of love than any of those - a kind of love rooted and grounded in and inextricably intertwined with Covenant. I am talking about the kind of transcendent, multi-generational love Moshe recently described in Deuteronomy 4:32: ***And because He loved your fathers He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power ...***

Do you see the cross-generational intertwining of destiny aspect of Divine love in that description? It is not *unconditional love* we are talking about⁵ – it is

⁴ Remember how Messiah defined love for Him? He said: ***If you love Me you will keep*** [Hebrew *sh'mar*] ***My Commandments. John 14:15.***

⁵ The Bible never speaks of love as 'conditional' or 'unconditional'. The issue of conditions or the lack thereof is something the mind of man dreamed up. The use of the term to describe the love of the Holy One has bled over from the *chol* [i.e. man-conceived] realm of psychology.

unstoppable love. But let us not stop there in our exploration of the concept of *ahav*. When the Torah talks of *ahav* it is talking about the very special kind of love Yeshua poured out on His little band of *talmidim* [disciples]. As Yochanan [John] tells us: ... *having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* John 13:1[b].

What Torah is talking about when it uses the Hebrew verb *ahav* is the kind and quality and dimension of transforming, overwhelming love about which Yochanan wrote when He said:

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us,
that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us,
because it did not know Him.
Beloved, now we are children of God;
and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be,
but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*
[I John 3:1-3]

What manner of love is this? It is not an English or Greek concept. It is rooted and grounded in Hebrew. So we need to explore what the Hebrew language teaches us about love.

The Hebraic Experience of Divine Love

As we have discussed previously in these studies, the Hebrew verb our English Bibles most often translate as “love” is *ahav*⁶. To *ahav* literally means to ‘*pant after*’ with desire for increasingly meaningful and frequent interactions and expanding maximal levels of intimacy in all appropriate forms. The first Biblical usage of the Hebrew verb *ahav* is in Genesis 22:2. In that verse the Holy One uses *ahav* to describe the nature of Avraham’s deep feelings of closeness to and affection for his son Yitzchak. This is far more than the *storge* affection of a parent for a child. This is a love that involves the *eternal intertwining of destinies*. This is a matter of *Covenant connection*. The next usage of *ahav* in Torah is found in Genesis 24:67. There the writer of Torah uses the Hebrew verb *ahav* to describe Yitzchak’s passion for his new bride Rivkah. This is more than the *eros* attraction of a man for a woman. Again, this is a matter of intertwining of destinies and eternal *Covenant connection*.

From these two usages we can see that the Hebrew verb *ahav* refers to a passionate, deep-seated kind of love one feels for someone *who represents the promise of the fulfillment of one’s deepest desires*. Avraham longed 100 years for a son and heir and suffered much heartbreak in the course of his longing; Yitzchak was the fulfillment of his dream. He *ahav*-ed him – *no holds barred*, holding nothing back. Yitzchak had spent 40 years alone and felt especially alone after his

⁶ This is Strong’s Hebrew word #157, spelled *alef, hey, beit, and* pronounced *aw-hawb’*

mother Sarah's death. Rivkah captured his heart. She became the fulfillment of his intense desire for a bride. He *ahav*-ed her – as the apple of his eye. And His soul was bound up with her.

When the Holy One says He will *ahav* us, therefore, it is no small thing. The love of the Creator of the Universe is much, much more than a religious cliché. His promise to *ahav* us means He is committed to both see and cultivate in us and invest such resources and energies as are necessary to bring forth from us the ultimate companion for which He has longed throughout eternity. It means He will *rejoice over us*, and *dote upon us*, and *consciously choose His relationship with us as His favorite and most fulfilling relationship*. It means He will *aggressively pursue communion/fellowship and constant interaction with*, and to thereby seek to form a deep, abiding *bond with*, us, preferring our company over that of any other people. How awesome is that? It is not something we can just pass over without stopping to bow in wonder, awe, amazement, astonishment, and gratitude.

Do you want more than just to go to meetings at a church or synagogue while you live and go to Heaven instead of Hell when you die? Do you want to feel – and live in - the kind of love the writer of Torah is talking about in increasing quality and quantity each day, each week, each season, and each year of your life? Do you want to experience and make your normal way of life the kind of love relationship with the Holy One about which Shaul was experiencing when He wrote:

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.

[Romans 8:38-39]

The secret to such an unshakable bond of love is not found in a moment's whispering of a 'sinner's prayer'. Nor is it found in joining a church or synagogue. Nor is it found in preaching or being preached at, teaching or being taught, prophesying or being prophesied to, pastoring or being pastored, or evangelizing or being evangelized. Nor is that kind of love found in striving, independent of the Holy One, to perform 'works of law' to an unreachable Divine standard of satisfaction in a fool's quest to earn love the Holy One already feels for every human being He created. Heaven forbid. The secret to receiving and walking in the *ahav* kind and quality of Divine love is found in simply requiting and returning the Holy One's loving advances in the most natural way possible - by joyfully taking His Hand and letting Him show you how to do what He says His Beloved will do, become Who He says His Beloved will be, and live the kind of humble, unselfish, wise, world-changing lifestyle He says His Beloved will live.

In Summary

Does the Holy One love everyone? Of course He does. Is the love of the Holy One dependent or contingent upon *works of the flesh*? Of course it is not. But Torah makes it clear that while as the Creator the Holy One loves every human being in a general, universal sense there is nevertheless a unique and special kind and quality of aggressive, active, covenant-based love [in Hebrew *AHAV*] which the Holy One has reserved for those who trust Him enough to put aside the appetites, desires, and priorities of the flesh, culture, science, and religion and willingly surrender their time, their energy, and their passion to engage in the great adventure of walking through life hand-in-Hand with Him, *sh'ma-ing*, *sh'mar-ing* and *asah-ing* His life instructions along the way.

The kind of love Torah is talking about in Deuteronomy 7:13, you see, is the kind and quality of love that the Holy One releases in joyful, exuberant, extravagant abundance when His general love begins to be requited and returned by human beings. Oh that all men would hunger and thirst for the sweet taste and exquisite wonder of the kind of Divine love that is released from Heaven when His general love for mankind is requited and returned! *Selah!* So please do not ever be satisfied with experiencing only the Holy One's general and universal love for mankind. Go for *ahav*. I assure you, you will never be sorry you did.

2. He will BLESS us

Moshe says that if we *sh'ma*, *sh'mar* and *asah* the Holy One's life instructions in addition to *ahav-ing* us the Holy One will also *bless* us. This is also a promise of such amazing supernatural substance that we should never just rush by it in haste. Let's unwrap a little of what this second of *the big three* promises of the Holy One entails, shall we?

The word our English Bibles translate as "bless" is *barach*⁷. *Barach* means *to release from restrictions and limitations*. To *barach* someone or something means *to infuse the object of blessing with unlimited potential and empowerment*.

The Holy One promises that if we will requite His general love for us by embarking on the great adventure of *sh'ma-ing sh'mar-ing* and *asah-ing* His instructions for living He will *barach us*. He will *release us from restrictions*. He will *release us from limitations*. He will *infuse us with unlimited potential and empowerment*. We will be *like calves released from the stall*. Are you beginning to *feel it in your life yet*? Can you *hear the sound of Heaven's blessing wafting your way even as you read these words and meditate on this amazing promise*? Do you *sense the wonderful things the Holy One is even now thinking and saying*

⁷ Barach is *beit, resh, chet*. Strong's Hebrew word #1288, it is pronounced *baw-rahk'*.

about and proclaiming over you?

Oh, of course, the world – and for that matter your own sin-corrupted flesh – want very much to severely *limit your potential* and *restrict your destiny*. The world simply cannot handle the glorious, Divinely connected, world-changing “you” the Holy One created you to be. The world wants to keep you safely tucked away ‘in a box’ with walls made of cultural, philosophical, religious and economic limitations and a four-level cover of fear, doubt, guilt, and lust. As long as you are stuck in such a box the world’s puppet masters can control and manipulate you. Who are these puppet masters? They are all those who want you to live out your days in a laboratory mouse cage of their design toiling away on a hamster wheel of their engineering. They have designed, erected and are more than willing to threaten to enforce against you limitations and restrictions like *cultural barriers, social staircases, age-appropriate activities, career tracts, ministry models, leadership-training formulas, and glass ceilings*. They are the ones who have you trained to respond to their petty offers of stimulation like Pavlov’s dogs salivating at the sound of a bell. They desire to keep you bound up with their protocols of conditioned response. They want you to spend all your time, money, energy, intellect, talent, and passion on whatever ideas, doctrines, products, programs, meetings, and activities they happen to be promoting at the moment.

As long as you allow the world and your sin-corrupted flesh to keep you in bondage to the perverted network of priorities, values, thought-patterns, philosophies, paranoias, creeds, formulas, theories, behavior models, defense mechanisms and conditioned response manipulations of this age your unique potential to be a burning and shining light to the nations and peoples of the earth will always remain just out of reach. That is why Ya’akov [James] taught that *friendship with the world is enmity with the Holy One*, and that *whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*. **James 4:4**. That is why Shaul of Tarsus [Paul] taught that *to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*. He explained that *the carnal mind is enmity against the Holy One because it is not subject to the law of the Holy One, nor indeed can be*, and that *those who are in the flesh cannot please the Holy One*. **Romans 8:6-8**.

Remember, *you were made for more than this*. You were made to have great Kingdom Impact – and to leave the world far better for your presence here than it would have been without it. The Holy One created you with a time-release packet of unique gifts to release upon the earth during your appointed ‘such a time as this’. All it takes is for you to arise, and shine, and let the light of His Countenance and glory of the Holy One rise upon you. And the good news is that *the Holy One*

*is passionately committed to make that happen for you. He knows, you see, that no one else can do what He designed you uniquely to do. Hence a million times more than the puppet masters want you locked in a restrictive, limiting box of their making the Holy One wants you free to do what He put you on earth to do whenever and however He designed you to do it. He greatly and jealously desires for you to break free of the world's limitations and restrictions and walk in His abundant BLESSINGS. For it is in the wake and backwaters of His blessings that you will be set free to walk in your destiny and purpose and play your assigned part in the great Isaiah 60 and 61 drama of the Latter Days. And that is why He has promised to BLESS you – if, when, as, and to the extent you *sh'ma, sh'mar*, and *asah* the words of His Mouth.*

3. *He will MULTIPLY us*

Even loving us extravagantly and releasing freeing waves of blessing over us is by no means all Moshe says the Holy One will do for us if we *sh'ma, sh'mar*, and *asah*. There is yet one more component to the 'big three' promises of the Holy One for those who enter into the Great Torah Lifestyle Adventure. Moshe says the Holy One will in also *multiply* those who do so. This too requires us pause and meditate on the meaning and the ramifications of this awesome promise.

Do you ever feel alone in your Torah walk? Do you ever hunger for community and fellowship and a sense of common purpose? Sure you do. And the Holy One knows you do. And He has you covered on this front as well. We just have to trust Him to make these things happen, and not cave in the temptation to create a network of contentious Ishmaels in the strength of our own flesh.

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'multiply' is a form of the verb root *rabah*⁸. This verb means to *become many*, to *become numerous*, to *multiply*. It is first found in Scripture in Genesis 1:22, where the Holy One creatively empowered sea creatures and creatures of the air to abound [*rabah*] in the waters of earth and the dome of heaven. A corresponding creative empowerment was spoken by the Holy One over man in Genesis 1:28, before the expulsion from the Garden, and again after the Flood in Genesis 9:1. Like *barach* the Hebrew verb *rabah* is a clearly identifiable component of the package of promises the Holy One made to Avraham – see Genesis 16:10 where the Holy One told Avram “*I will multiply (rabah) your seed exceedingly.*” See also Genesis 17:2, where the Holy One told the patriarch “*I will make you fruitful and multiply (rabah) you.*” This promise was reiterated in Genesis 22:17⁹.

⁸ *Rabah* is *resh, beit, hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #7235, it is pronounced *raw-baw'*.

⁹ This was also promised to Yitzchak [see Genesis 26:4] and to Ya'akov [see Genesis 28:3, 35:11, and 48:4].

The *rabah* empowerment means that the Holy One will see to it that our numbers will grow exponentially, in perfect resonance with His times and seasons – and will do so no matter what famines, plagues, persecutions or holocausts people with the Serpent-mentality hurl at us.

***The Vast Realms of Blessedness and Societal Impact
that the Holy One Opens To Us
As, When, and To the Extent We Embrace
and Bind Ourselves to Him With the Cord of Three Strands***

But Moshe makes it clear that the Holy One’s plan for those who requite His love and voluntarily choose to walk in His ways does not by any means stop with the ‘big three’ we have been discussing. Moshe goes on to tell us that if, when, and to the extent we enter into the *sh’ma*, *sh’mar*, and *asah* lifestyle the Holy One has designed for His Beloved we will experience seasons of economic prosperity beyond any natural explanation:

*He will also bless [i.e. release from limitations and restrictions] the fruit of your body
and the fruit of your soil/land/country;
your grain; and your new wine; and your oil;
the increase of your cattle; and the young of your flock;
in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you.
You will be blessed above all peoples:
*there will not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.**

Please note that the experience of each of these promised levels of fruitfulness is tied to *seasons* as well as *ekev conditions*. One only produces the fruit of the body after a long season beginning with conception and ending with birth. One only enjoys the fruit of the ground after a long season beginning with plowing and sowing and culminating in reaping a mature crop. The same ‘in season’ approach applies to grain, to wine, to oil, to cattle and flock, etc. The Torah does not promise anyone a life of luxury, leisure, or self-indulgence. It promises – subject to the stated Covenantal *ekev* conditions - that the Holy One will pour out marvelous abundance IN SEASON, as a blessing upon our faithful and diligent watchfulness and cooperation with Him.

In addition to the promise of seasonal abundance Moshe advises that the Holy One will supernaturally bless our physical bodies with health. Specifically he says that if, when, as and to the extent we *sh’ma*, *sh’mar* and *asah* the life instructions of the Holy One: *The Holy One will take away from you all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Mitzrayim, which you know, will He put on you, but will lay them on all those who hate you.*

Moshe does not say we will never catch a cold. Neither does he promise we will never contract malaria, develop a cancerous growth, get an MRSA infection, or get

AIDS. What he says the Holy One will do is “take away” [Hebrew *sur*] from us something he calls *kol choli*. Let’s meditate on these operative Hebrew words and phrases as well. The Hebrew verb, *sur*, translated in this passage as ‘take away’, means to *peel back or off or turn away* something – something that is *in place* and having a deleterious, limiting effect. The Hebrew phrase *kol choli*, usually translated in English Bibles as ‘all sickness’, and describing what the Holy One promises to ‘take away’, actually means *all affliction, calamity, and sadness*. The promise the Holy One has made is not that those who embrace the *sh’ma, sh’mar* and *asah* lifestyle will never get sick. He is not saying His Beloved will never suffer calamity. He is not saying His People will never be brokenhearted. We will probably have to do with some level of each of those things. The promise the Holy One is making is that when we do experience negative things like this in the course of our lives and relationships He will never leave us alone to suffer or die in misery, affliction, grief and depression. He will instead stay radically engaged with us as we go through these things and will deliver us and peel them off of us in due time and manner.

Would You Be a Trustworthy Steward of the Power of Life and Death Over Those Who Oppose You?

Moshe informs us that, if, as, when, and to the extent we sh’ma His Voice, sh’mar His Covenant, and asah His mitzvot and mishpatim, He will deliver our enemies into our hands. He will cause their star to fall, and ours to rise. He will cause their influence to decrease, and will cause ours to increase. He will actually give us the power of life and death over those who have sought our lives:

*You will consume all the peoples who the Holy One your God shall deliver to you;
your eye is not to pity them.*

But Moshe cautions us that these great blessings are only promised to us IF, WHEN, AND TO THE EXTENT WE CONTINUE TO CLING TO THE HOLY ONE AS OUR ONLY GOD. He warns us specifically: ***... you are not to serve their gods; for that will be a snare to you.*** Deuteronomy 7:12-16.

Important Matters of Sequence and Relationship

As these verses indicate this week’s parsha is not direct cause and effect but about sequence and relationship. “On the heels” of *sh’ma*¹⁰-ing, *sh’mar*¹¹-ing, and *asah*¹²-

¹⁰ This is the Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as “hear”, “listen”, and “obey”. It means to respond to the words of another person [or the Holy One] in a positive way, letting those words change your way of thinking, speaking, and acting, and your relationships, in a way consistent with the words the other person [or the Holy One] spoke.

¹¹ This is the Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as “keep”. It means, however, to consider something valuable enough to protect and defend, and to therefore carefully guard and protect and cling to and cherish and keep watch over something.

ing the Holy One's *mish'patim*, Moshe says, naturally comes blessing. *Upon the heels of* our HEARKENING TO, CHERISHING AND TREASURING, and DOING the Holy One's *mish'patim* we experience the Holy One's fullness.

Please note that this does not mean we have *a three-step program* to receive material blessings. We do not 'earn' material blessings from the Holy One's by Torah observance. The blessings are not intended as a 'reward' on earth for being good or for doing good. To the contrary, the blessings are given solely for redemptive, testimonial purposes. He causes blessings to follow those who *sh'ma*, *sh'mar* and *asah* His Torah simply because the people of the world need to see, and long for, the beauty of walking in fellowship with Him.

The world needs to see men, women and children respond to life's controversies, offenses, difficulties, and inequities in accordance with the Divine Bridegroom's pronounced judgments as to what thoughts, speech, and deeds are *appropriate and inappropriate, just and unjust, permissible and forbidden, and beneficial and detrimental* in whatever situation they face. And the world needs to see us do this *not in the hope of receiving material blessings* by reason thereof, *but simply because we intimately know, passionately adore, and totally reverence the Holy One and have completely surrendered to Him our wills, our minds, and our emotions, as well as our hands, feet, eyes, ears, and organs of speech.* The world needs to see a clear picture of the joy and blessing that flows from *yielding to the Divine Bridegroom's will – as evidenced by the mishpatim He spoke to Moshe at Sinai* - the way clay yields to the potter's hands. And Moshe wants us to know that when we respond to the Holy One's *mishpatim* in these ways *wonderful things* will begin to happen to us¹³. But what exactly is the type of response to the Holy One's *mishpatim* that Moshe has in mind?

***'Obeying' and Sh'ma-ing and Very Different Approaches;
Obedience Is Cheap and Unsatisfying
Compared to Unconditional Trust and Complete Surrender***

Some interpret Torah to teach that the pathway to blessing is through *obedience*. That is not necessarily so. The blessings the Holy One offers to empower/fund the Great Plan of Redemption and Restoration cannot be manipulated by human beings determined to 'obey'. 'Obedience', you see, is an abstract Western concept – a manipulative behavior pattern relied upon by people who view life through a

¹² This is the Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as "do". It means to interact with raw materials creatively, the way a potter interacts with clay, working with it, molding it and forming it, until it gradually becomes something useful, valuable, and beautiful.

¹³ The result of *lo sh'ma-ing* [not listening, hearing, heeding, and surrendering to] the Holy One's words is stated in Deuteronomy 8:20: ***"You will be destroyed just like the nations that God is destroying before you - that will be the result if you do not sh'ma the Holy One Eloheicha in everything."***

pseudo-intellectual, Western civilization influenced mindset. In Hebrew, the verb the Holy One uses – His primary verb of His Covenantal *love language* – is not ‘obey’; it is, instead, *sh’ma*. The blessings that He promises to men are not offered to those who ‘obey’ a bunch of laws; they are, instead, to those who *sh’ma* their Bridegroom-King’s Voice – then, as a natural outgrowth of *sh’ma*-ing His Voice, respond to His Vocal prompting with the fullness of their heart, of their soul [*i.e. their mind, their will, and their emotions*], and of all their strength/substance – *i.e. their very essence*. Obedience, you see, is *behavioral*; *sh’ma*-ing, on the other hand, is *relational*. Obedience is for *legalistic manipulators*; *sh’ma*-ing is for lovers. That is because ‘obedience’ is only one small aspect of the translation of the Hebrew word *sh’ma*. To *sh’ma* does not mean merely to ‘obey’ – it means to *totally surrender the will*.

Obedience is something one does because he *has* to, whether he wants to or not. One can obey even without any relationship – and can even obey while hating, and desiring the death of, the one being obeyed. That is one of the main differences between *obeying* and *sh’ma*-ing. One cannot *sh’ma* without *relationship*. One cannot *sh’ma* without trust. To *sh’ma* is *to respond to someone one trusts, to follow that person’s lead, to participate in that person’s agenda, and to commit all one’s heart, soul, and strength to fulfill that person’s will*.

To *sh’ma* is a *covenant response*. It is *what covenant partners do*. Obedience, on the other hand, is just *doing what you are told*. Motive, attitude and relationship are irrelevant. Obedience, in contrast, is *not* about relationship at all. It is *solely about furthering one’s own interests*. One *obeys* because it is in his or her best interest to do so. If circumstances or perspectives change, such that *disobeying* ever comes to be viewed by a person as more in the person’s best interest than obeying, the person will disobey without blinking an eye. How can this be? How can people *obey* the Holy One for years, then sell out in a moment? Because ‘obedience’ is a *fleshly activity*. It is merely a *means to an end* – a way to *get something* or *avoid something*. The Hebrew concept of *sh’ma*-ing, on the other hand, is not a means to an end - it is *an end to itself*. It is just what covenant partner’s do. We may – and many do - *obey* the Holy One in an effort to “get under the spout where the blessing comes out”; but we cannot *sh’ma* the Holy One for that reason. We *sh’ma* the Holy One, if at all, simply because He is our Divine Bridegroom, because He has revealed Himself to us, and has chosen us, and because now that we have tasted the wonderful love of God, it is absolutely *unthinkable* for us to do anything else.

We *sh’ma* [and *sh’mar* and *asah* as well] the Holy One’s instructions for living because those instructions *are who we are and what we were created to be*. We *sh’ma*

because the music to the Song of Songs is playing, and our Bridegroom has taken us by the hand, led us to the dance floor, pulled us near to His breast, and taken the first step. We *sh'ma* because we are *one* with Him, and what He does, we do. As dogs bark because it is in their nature to do so, new Creations *sh'ma* the Voice of their Divine Bridegroom. As dogs protect their territory and their master because it is in their nature to do so, new creations in the Holy One *sh'mar* the Holy One's words. As dogs dig holes and bury bones in the earth because it is in their nature to do so, new Creations in the Holy One *asah* the Holy One's *mitzvot* and *mish'patim*. For us it is not a matter of "obedience"; it is a matter of the *changed nature* we have by virtue of our Redeemer's regenerating, empowering love. It is a matter of *covenant*. It is a matter of *relationship*. It is *why we were created*. It is *who we are*. Our life, you see, is no longer a solo performance – it is a *lovers' dance* between totally committed life partners. He *leads* and we *respond*. This is the essence of *ahav* [love].

The Bitter Fruit of A Legalistic Approach

If however our motive in interacting with the Holy One's instructions for living ever changes, and becomes, even in part, to receive the blessings, or "cause" the wonderful things He has promised to happen; if we begin to think we can, by 'obeying', manipulate the Holy One to get what we want from Him; then we quickly find ourselves unable to wholeheartedly complete the three things on the heels of which blessing follows¹⁴. That is because we have, by thinking ahead to the blessings and focusing on them rather than on Him, halted the *lovers' dance*, have broken away from the Holy One's embrace, and begun instead to do a *solo dance* to music we made up in our head – or music piped in from another source.

Like people on television talk or game shows who are constantly checking the monitor to see how they are appearing on camera, a person whose approach to the Holy One's word is to *obey so he/she can qualify to receive blessings* is continually looking over his or her shoulder to see if he/she has "done enough" to receive the blessings. He pats himself on the back when he does something "good", and gets angry at himself/herself when he does something "bad". Thus distracted he/she misses the whole point, and his/her obedience and observance become frustrating, fruitless, and futile. *Legalism* takes over. And once we get out of step with the lovers' dance, and start *solo-ing*, something follows 'on the heels' which is not what the Holy One had in mind for us.

We begin to judge the Holy One as fickle and untrue to His covenant. We begin to look down our noses at others who behave badly – instead of seeing them through the Holy One's eyes of love, hope, patience, and confidence in His capacity to

¹⁴ That is *sh'ma-ing* the Holy One, and *sh'mar-ing* and *asah-ing* His *mitzvot* and *mish'patim*.

redeem and restore. We grow to consider His precepts a burden, an inconvenience, a bother. We assign His value judgments to another generation, to another era, to a backward and unenlightened people. We look for another three-step plan to receive the blessings. We flock to the latest charismatic rabbi, author, preacher, teacher, or leadership model, or doctrine, or “intercessory prayer” group, or “praise and worship” modality, or to some other “means to an end” religious fad attached to which we see any fragment of truth and which makes our flesh feel important for awhile. We cease to pursue after the Holy One as our *lifeline*. We pursue instead “fellowship” or “revelation” or “ministry” or “holiness” or “worship” or “intercession”, or some “movement”.

All these things happen when we *cease to reverence the words of His Mouth*. And as a consequence we, like our ancestors, die in the desert. We wind up fiddling away our destiny and purpose in life while we argue over whose meetings are best, whose worship is more pure, whose prayers or prayer models are more spiritual, whose revelation is more exciting, whose fragment of truth is more important, whose ministry is more anointed, whose message is more relevant for our little group - and who is most responsible for the deteriorated condition of the people of the Holy One.

Save the Last Dance for Me

Somewhere however a Voice is calling to us. Somewhere ancient paths lay untrod. Somewhere, forgotten among the shuffle and the rush, the piety and the gooseflesh, are the eternal precepts of the Holy One. Somewhere Wisdom is calling in the streets, saying, “***Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts ...***” It is if the Creator of Heaven and Earth is saying to all of us: “*Save the last dance for Me!*” *Selah!* [Pause, and quietly think on that!]

Questions For Today’s Study

1. In Deuteronomy 7:12 Moses sets out the essential condition - the big “if” - for Israel to walk in its destiny and receive the fullness of the inheritance God had prepared. What was the essential condition (the big “if”)?
2. The big “if” of verse 12 involves doing three different things with God’s “*mish’patim*” [pronounced “*mish-paw ’-eem*”; translated “judgment” in the KJV and “precepts” in the Amplified].

[A] Look up “*mishpat*” [the singular version of the Hebrew word *mish’patim*] in Strong’s Concordance [It is Strong’s Hebrew Word #4941] and in Gesenius; then write what you think Moshe was talking about when he used the word “*mishpat*” in that verse.

[B] What 3 things did Moshe say that the people were supposed to do with God’s “*mishpat*”? Look up the Hebrew words that go along with those three

things, and write descriptions of the Hebraic word pictures that underlie each of those Hebrew words [Hint: the words in question are Strong's Hebrew word #s 8085, 8104, and 6213].

3. In Deuteronomy 7:12-24 Moshe sets out some of the blessings God promises to Israel if it meets the condition He set out in verse 12. Using verses 12-24 as your guide make a list of all the blessings the Holy One promises to those who *sh'ma*, *sh'mar*, and *asah* His words.

4. What did the Holy One say He would do with regard to the nations that were in the Land of Promise? [Verses 18-24a] What did the Holy One say we were to do with regard to those same nations? [vv. 24b-26]

5. In this week's Haftarah the general subject matter that *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] is covering is *the restoration of Israel*, and its constitution (in its restored state) as "the Servant of the Holy One".

After the destruction of *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem] by the Babylonians and the carrying into exile of the people of Israel, Tzion, the central Mountain of *Y'rushalayim*, utters a sorrowful lament: "***Adonai has forsaken*** [Hebrew, 'azav - to leave behind; to abandon; to desert; to reject; to cast adrift; to set free to fend for itself; to neglect one once loved]; ***Adonai has forgotten!***" One might be tempted to think a mountain crying out in sorrow over the loss of its people is merely poetic, or perhaps pure fantasy. But consider Romans 8:19-22 - wherein Shaul says all creation groans in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. There is a whole lot more going on in the world than our sin-corrupted human senses can detect. The lament of Tziyon and the groaning of Creation are just examples of the sounds which the Holy One hears, but which are presently inaudible to human ears.

The Holy One is not deaf to nor silent in the face of the supersonic lament of Tzion. He responds with tender assurance and comfort:

***"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast,
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget, I WILL NOT FORGET YOU!
Behold, I have engraved¹⁵ you on the palms¹⁶ of My hands;
Your walls¹⁷ are continually before Me!***

¹⁵ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'engraved' is *chaqaq*, *chet*, *kuf*, *kuf*, Strong's Hebrew word # 2710, pronounced *khaw-kawk*. For an illustrative usage see Job 19:23 ["*Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed [chaqaq] in a book!*"]

¹⁶ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate figuratively as "the palms of my hands" is *kaf*, Strong's Hebrew word #3709, pronounced like the English word "*calf*". It is first used in Genesis 8:9, to describe the hollowed-out part of a dove's foot. It is derived from the verb root *kafaf*, *kaf*, *peh*, *peh sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #3721, pronounced *kaw-fawf*, meaning "to bend", or "to bow".

¹⁷ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as *wall(s)* is *chomah*, *chet*, *vav*, *mem*, *hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #2346, pronounced *kho-maw*. It's first usage is in Exodus 14:22, to describe the "walls" of

The Holy One not only reassured Tzion that He had neither forsaken nor forgotten her, He also proclaimed His intention - now that her “hard service” was accomplished, to bring her sons back to her - and in such numbers that the mount of Tzion would be too small to contain them. The Holy One wanted His people to know that not only had they not been abandoned or forsaken - *they are actually His constant focus every single day*. Why is the Holy One so [seemingly] ‘obsessed’ with the Hebrew people? Because the Holy One has decreed that the ultimate redemption of Creation and mankind *can only be accomplished through the Hebrew people*. The era of redemption absolutely revolves around the Hebrew people. The covenants He made with the Hebrew people through Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov, and Moshe have always been and will always be the only plan the Holy One has – or needs – for the redemption of mankind.

[A] Why did *Tzion* [Zion] feel abandoned and deserted by the Holy One?

[B] How did the Holy One reassure Tzion that she was not abandoned?

[C] According to verse 16 what had the Holy One done that guaranteed Israel she would not be forgotten?

6. In today’s reading from the apostolic Scriptures Shaul tells the Roman believers:

What then shall we say about these things¹⁸?

If the Holy One is for us, who can be against us?

*He who didn't spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,
how would he not also with him freely give us all things?*

[Romans 8:31-32]

[A] What does Shaul [Paul] say the Holy One will give us as His people?

[B] What has He done to assure us of this?

[C] How do you think verse 32 of Romans 8 relates to Deuteronomy 7:12-15, 17-24?

*May you have ears to hear Mount Tzion groaning, and may your righteousness,
and that of your children and of your children’s children, comfort her.*

The Rabbi’s son

Red Sea water between which B’nei Yisrael walked dry-shod. In Leviticus it is used to describe *the walls of a city*. See Leviticus 25:30-31. In I Samuel 25:16 it is used to describe David’s soldiers, who acted as guards for the possessions of his allies.

¹⁸ In context “these things” are the truths of which Shaul had theretofore spoken in Romans – the truth that in light of our being united with Messiah we are considered ‘the righteousness of the Holy One’, that our failures to fulfill Torah’s *mitzvot* and *mish’patim* in the flesh are not held against us who are united with (have become as one with) Messiah, and that the *Ruach HaQodesh* now so immerses us in the *mitzvot* and *mish’patim* that each day we are approaching them more and more the way Messiah did and less and less the way our flesh once did.

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:1-3

*O Holy One, you have been favorable to your land.
You have restored the fortunes of Ya`akov.
You have forgiven the iniquity of your people.
You have covered all their sin. Selah!
You have taken away all Your wrath.
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.*