

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Re'eh:*** **Deuteronomy 16:1-17**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 55:4-5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I John 4:5**

Three times a year

[Deuteronomy 16:16]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 16:1-11;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the First Petition, *Da'at* [The Prayer for Knowledge]

Shamor et-chodesh ha-Aviv – Cherish/treasure/watch for and watch over the month of greening grain Deuteronomy 16:1a.

Imagine a skilled artist sitting before a canvas. Envision him painting a Masterpiece. Each addition he makes to the canvas is beautiful, of course; but some of his brushstrokes are pure genius. It is those special brushstrokes that distinguish the artist as a true canvas *virtuoso*. Those are the masterstrokes that introduce perspective, dimension, and the 'wow' factor. They literally scream out to anyone who gazes upon the work: '*here is excellence!*' Those brushstrokes are what makes the work a true *masterpiece* – instead of just another well-crafted *object d'art*. It is them that carry the Maestro's unique and unmistakable 'signature' of artistic excellence. It is them that capture the viewer's attention, draw him into the artist's vision, and elicit the breathless response.

Do you have the picture firmly in mind? Now consider the Holy One as the artist. As He was designing the intricate Masterpiece work that we call Creation, He not only plotted out and sculpted galaxies, solar systems, and us; He also crafted *every split second of what we think of as time* and *every square centimeter of what we think of as space*. He designed and meticulously fashioned hundreds of millions of sunrises, sunsets, breezes, storms, fogs, mists, showers, snowfalls, seedtimes, and harvests. He sculpted an infinite variety of mountains, valleys, forests, deserts, and waterways – not to mention all the species of creatures that fill the earth, the seas, and the Heavens. Then, like every truly great artist that ever applied brush to canvas, the Holy One employed special signature strokes of creativity whenever it suited Him, to infuse special attributes of His majesty and *kedusha* [*i.e.* the radiating waves of animating energy that emanate from the Divine Persona, often described by English-speakers as his 'holiness'] into strategically chosen intervals of time and space.

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What does that have to do with today's aliyah of *Re'eh*? Well, it seems that Moshe has found the Creator's secret. He has discovered – and wants us to see as he sees - the 'special signature brushstrokes' of the Creator. He intends to help us not only locate and navigate through these 'special signature stroke' times, seasons, and places, but to catch and absorb the holiness and energy that emanate from them. He wants us to delight in them, and to draw strength from our encounters with them.

Different Strokes ... for Different, Set-Apart Folks

What intervals in time and season is Moshe babbling about? He is, of course, talking about the Holy One's specially appointed times and seasons of holiness. In this part of the discourse he will be reminding us specifically about [1] the eve of Passover, [2] the Week of Unleavened Bread, [3] the Season of Counting the Omer, [4] the mo'ed of *Shavuot* [Pentecost], and [5] the seven days of Sukkot [The 'Feast' of Tabernacles]. He wants us to *re'eh* – behold – these Divine Appointments/Acts in His Great Passion Play in a new light.

What geographical coordinates are Moshe so intensely excited about? He is, of course, excited generally about the coordinates of latitude and longitude that converge at the beautiful land He calls Yisrael – and, more specifically, at the holiest of all cities ever inhabited by man - *Jerusalem*. *Selah!* Cue Psalm 122! The geographical coordinates of Israel were designed by the Master Artist to speak eloquently of the Great Redemption that He intends to effectuate. And Jerusalem? Well, Jerusalem is His *piece de resistance* – the place where the Artist would choose to 'sign' His Work, by writing/placing His Name.

Jerusalem, the place of *Moriyah*, *Scopus*, and *Tziyon*, *Gulgolet* and *Olivet*, was, is, and will always be the place where all people who know, love, and serve the Greatest of all Artists long to visit Him. It is where sons and daughters of the Covenant report for duty and assignment; where they rest and refresh, where they reconnect with their King and their life's true purpose; and where they rejoice as they have never even dreamed of rejoicing elsewhere. So, the questions Moshe is putting on the table in this aliyah are: Is this *your town* too? Are you connected to and familiar with the special portals of holiness that the Holy One has established there? And are you – or are you not – living in tune with the special signature brushstroke times, seasons, and geography of the Great King?

Do You Remember That City Uncle Avraham Was Looking For?

Moshe wants us to catch his obsession with this city. Like Avraham, even though he presently dwells in a tent, he can't seem to stop thinking – or talking - about an

elevated city full of palaces/fortresses upon strong, solid rock foundations², whose Builder and Maker is God. See Hebrews 11:9-10. Our 120-year-old prophet-turned-rabbi keeps looking across the Jordan Valley, grinning like a schoolboy, and pointing in the direction of the place where Avraham almost presented Yitzchak to the Holy One as an *olah*. Moshe doesn't even know this city's name; he just refers to it as '*the place*' [Hebrew *ha-makom*] *where the Creator of the Universe has chosen to 'place His Name'*. See Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, & 21; Deuteronomy 14:23 & 24; Deuteronomy 16:2, 6, 11, and Deuteronomy 26:2. But we know instinctively what city he has in mind. It is *Y'rushalayim* – the City of Wholeness, Wellness, Well-Being, and Peace! Oh, *what a city!* Situated at the strategic epicenter of the earth, this city is destined to become the command post of the Kingdom of Heaven's earthly operations. At this beautiful place where five hills³ stand watch over the Kidron, Hinnom, and Tyropoeon valleys, the Holy One sits enthroned and receives diplomatic visitors. This is where Melki-Tzedek released Heaven's blessings in ancient times; and where Mashiach will reign and release Heaven's Wisdom in days to come. This is where David and his progeny lived and reigned. It is where Sh'lomo built the First Temple - where Zerubbabel built the Second, and where Mashiach will one day establish the Third. This place is critically important to the outworking of the Creator's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Humankind and for the Restoration of Creation to Edenic Beauty and Fruitfulness. This place is special. It is forever set apart as the primary portal through which the Creator intends to release blessings upon the earth.

***Beautiful in elevation – the Joy of the Whole Earth –
is Mount Tziyon ... the City of the Great King***

Does the mention Jerusalem inspire, excite, and energize you? Does the thought of her awaken rivers of delight in your soul? Do you love her? Do you consider her 'your' city – as well as the city of your King? Do you pray daily for her *shalom*? Does your heart yearn for her pleasant vistas? Do you exalt her above your chief joy? Do you weep at her misfortunes? Do you look forward enthusiastically to her future? Do you have a workable plan to make pilgrimage to her in order to observe/commemorate/celebrate within her gates – with people from all nations - the Divine Appointments the Bridegroom-King has established to announce His Kingdom's Themes and Agendas? Will you make the scheduled meetings with our Great King this year – or will you miss them? And more importantly, will you *re'eh* what these Divine Appointments are *really all about* – or will you just observe them according to tradition, custom, and convenience? Oh, Dear Reader –

² This is the essence of the Hebrew noun *יְרוּשָׁלַיִם* – *i.e. arman* [see Psalm 48:13 and 122:7, as well as Jeremiah 30:18]. This is the city set on a hill that cannot be hidden, full of houses built on a solid rock foundation, of which Yeshua taught.

³ The five hills are Tziyon, Moriyah, Olivet, Scopus, and Gulgolet [a/k/a 'Golgotha'].

the pilgrimages to Jerusalem called for by the Holy One are not feasts to observe – they are important affairs of state that we are called to help the world BEHOLD the dazzling excellence of our Bridegroom King’s Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation. Participation in them AS INSTRUCTED IN TORAH is absolutely essential to the revelation of the ‘Good News’ of the Kingdom.

Look Closer - There is Much More to Each of the Pilgrimage Festivals Than Meets the Natural Eye

As the great *Re’eh* download winds down, Moshe elects to return to the subject with which he began – i.e. *what true, Torah-based worship of the Holy One our God is supposed to consist of and look like*. This is one of those areas He intends to keep pushing us out of our comfort zones. Moshe has already told us what we are NOT to do in the name of worshipping the Holy One. Beginning with today’s aliyah, Moshe will remind us what we ARE to do. That involves what our Bridegroom-King *deserves* – and *desires* – us to do.

Do you remember what we learned earlier this week about *re’eh* vision? We learned that having *re’eh* vision involves seeing things from the Holy One’s perspective. As we discussed, the Holy One – Who dwells outside of time - looks at people, things and situations through *three lenses at the same time*. The first lens through which the Holy One views people and situations – the one which humans tend to think of as ‘past’ – is typified by Genesis 1:2. At that time the earth appeared to be without form, purposeless, and shrouded in mysterious, oppressive, directionless darkness – just like the people, events, circumstances, and experiences that we face appear to our natural eyes to be at any given moment. We cannot see any more to or about them than that. But our Bridegroom-King always does! He *re’eh’s*. He sees wave after wave of life-giving light coming forth from what we see only as darkness. The second lens through which the Holy One views everything is typified by Romans 8:28. After carefully examining and diagnosing what is before Him, the Holy One applies His vast stores of Creative energy and Masterful Craftsmanship to it. He begins to both *bring the potential in the person or situation in question into Divine order* and to *set in motion a redemptive process*. That is how He causes all things to *work together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose*. And still He is not through. The third lens of the *re’eh* vision the Holy One employs is typified by I Corinthians 3:12-13. The Holy One uses this lens to distinguish what about the person’s life or the situation is *gold* [i.e. a substance of pre-Fall Divine origin⁴], and what is *silver* [the product of co-laboring between the Holy One and man] and what is *wood, hay and straw/stubble*. He then washes the filth off the gold, does whatever is necessary to purify the silver – and burn away the wood, hay, and straw/stubble in the flame of His All-Consuming Presence.

So, let's apply these three *re'eh* lenses of Divinely enhanced vision to the pilgrimage festivals, shall we? What does the Holy One see in the pilgrimage festivals that we do not? What aspects of light does He want to release in the world through them? What fountain of good does He desire to release through them? And what wood, hay, and stubble concerning does He desire to burn up in us as we participate in them?

His Love Keeps Lifting us Higher

All week, with a sense of urgency, *Re'eh* has been calling us to 'behold' certain important facets of life through Heaven's Eyes. As we near the end of the parsha the final facet of life we are called to look at [this week] is TIME. Our Bridegroom-King has His own calendar with its own TIMES and SEASONS. If we are to walk with our Bridegroom-King, and move with Him, and let Him transform our life into a lover's dance with Him one of the most important foundational things we have to do is get off of the calendar and out of the rhythm of the other kingdom and get on His calendar and into His rhythm. To facilitate this, each year the Bridegroom-King puts on three Grand Kingdom Balls, and invites all who will come. The first of these galas occurs in the first month of the Kingdom year, and is called *Pesach* [Passover]. The second Kingdom-wide gala occurs in the third month of the Kingdom year, and is called *Shavuot* [Pentecost]. And the third and most glorious Kingdom-wide extravaganza occurs in the seventh month of the Kingdom year and is called *Sukkot* [Tabernacles].

The Glorious Kingdom Ball of the seventh month is just around the corner. The invitations have all been sent out. The guest list is out of this world. The fireworks are to die for. Please do not forget to RSVP. And whatever you do, do not let anyone or anything make you late for the next Royal Ball! Pssst ... in case you forgot – or were misinformed - the location of this Royal Ball is *Jerusalem!*

Our Scheduled Appointments To Meet With Our Creator and Redeemer At 'His House'

Moshe wants to conclude the *Re'eh* download by discussing with us once again in detail - and exhorting us to faithfully observe and commemorate - each of the Divine Appointments for which our Bridegroom-King calls upon us to leave our homes and travel [i.e. make a passionate pilgrimage] to stand before Him at Jerusalem. The three festivals of pilgrimage are *Pesach* in the springtime, *Shavuot* in the summer, and *Sukkot* in the fall. I call Torah's instructions on these three critical pilgrimages 'the *Test of Our Responsiveness to Divine Rhythm*'. Here is the essence of the *rhythm test*: what and who ranks highest on our priority matrix? Who are we *sh'ma*-ing? To what – and whose - rhythm are we marching? To

whose song are we dancing?

Why does Moshe think the particular days the Holy One has told us to mark on our calendars – and the three integrally-related yet uniquely distinct-in-focus pilgrimages of spirit and body each of those special days/seasons of days represents – are so important? Each of the Torah’s calls to pilgrimage requires us to ask ourselves some serious questions. The first question we have to ask ourselves when faced with a directive to drop everything and go up to Jerusalem to meet with Him, is *‘Are we walking with and in submission to our Bridegroom-King – or are we expecting Him to depart from His eternal rhythms – not to mention the grand redemptive plan He has developed and implemented - and come and spend time with us wherever we choose to place OUR name?’* The second question we have to ask ourselves is *‘Are we living our lives and adjusting our schedules to match up with our Bridegroom’s calendar - or are we selfishly insisting that He will change His course for our convenience, follow our calendar, concede to our schedule, and fit Himself into our matrix of priorities?’*

Tough questions, eh? Remember, I warned you in advance that parsha Re’eh was not going to be easy on the flesh. But think of it like this. Much like people might make appointments in advance to see doctors, lawyers, accountants, and business contacts, and set dates in advance for important events (weddings, parties, etc.), so the Holy One has undertaken to schedule special *appointments* – pre-arranged meetings, with the People Who represent His Kingdom and His Character to the world. On three of these special appointments the Holy One has graciously agreed to be our host – inviting us [indeed, *subpoenaing* us] to come to His palace, and step outside the limitations of time and space into a realm of eternal reality. The purpose of each one of the three meetings the Divine Bridegroom calls us to participate at ‘the Holy One’s Place’ is a little different, but each is merely a strategic variation on the theme of the DEEP, ABIDING, FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP He desires to have with those in covenant with Him.

The concept of *religious festivals*, of course, was nothing new at the time of Moshe. The pagans of Egypt, Kena’an, Assyria, Babylon, China, India, Africa, England, and elsewhere all held religious festivals. So, why did our Divine Bridegroom - who was so specific in saying we should not worship Him the way pagans worship their gods - turn right around and tell us to celebrate special times and seasons of the year. Because these celebrations were to be the antithesis of other peoples’ “religious festivals”. These celebrations were not to be just “parties”. The Holy One wanted to be sure that we do not fall into the trap of “observing special days” the way the other people groups of earth do. For us, days of Divine Appointment were to be dedicated to something *very, very special*.

The Sh'losh Regalim [3 Pilgrimages]

Moshe describes again, for the new generation who will actually enter Eretz Yisrael [the Land of Israel], the *sh'losh regalim* - the three “pilgrimage festivals” - in which every adult male is to participate⁴. He discusses them in chronological order, beginning in the spring.

Our Divine Appointment with the Bridegroom in the Month of Aviv

The first of the three special Divine Appointments - the foundational one upon in relation to which each of others is established – is in the lunar cycle each year in which *aviv* – i.e. the forming of grain heads on stalks of barley - occurs. What we are told to do is to ***shamor et-chodesh ha-aviv***. Deuteronomy 16:1a. Do you get it? We are not just supposed to celebrate Passover – we are supposed to *sh'mar the moon of aviv*. Literally, that means we are to cherish and delight in, and zealously guard the time of our tenderness – the entire cycle of the moon in which the earth brings forth the first batch of immature grain heads.

Look at this through the Genesis 1:2 lens. The grain upon which life depends is now in its most vulnerable state. It is immature. It can be destroyed by insects, birds, animals, fire, or inclement weather before ripening. It is merely a promise of a harvest that is without usable form – i.e. it is *tohu u'vohu*. The harvest – if it ever comes – is still weeks away. Why should we cherish and delight in this time of tenderness, vulnerability, and unfulfilled potential? Hmmm - isn't this what the walk of *trust* – and blessing the Holy One at all times - is all about? Isn't this what we are called to do in all areas and in regard to all aspects of life? Isn't that what proclaims to the world better than anything the redemptive plan of our Bridegroom-King? Isn't that how we proclaim the glorious message: *'I see it – but not now!'*? Isn't this how we learn to *proclaim good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the captive*?

Next, look at the instructions given concerning the moon cycle of *aviv* through the Romans 8:28 lens. The message is that *the Holy One is working all things together for good* - for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose, at least. Are we not to teach the world to focus only on the good – i.e. to overcome

⁴ Not mentioned in today's aliyah, because they are not *regalim* [pilgrimage festivals] are the *Shabbat*, *Yom T'ruah* [Rosh HaShanah] and *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement], *Purim*, the observance of which is decreed in the book of Esther (as a commemoration of the Holy One's vindication of His people in the Diaspora), or *Chanukah* [known Biblically as the “*festival of dedication*” – see John 10:22], the observance of which is called for by the apocryphal *Books of the Maccabees* (to celebrate the deliverance of the Redeemed from persecution, and the rededication of the Temple after its desecration at the hands of the demonic ruler Antiochus Epiphanes). All of these latter *mo'edim* were always intended by the Holy One to be celebrated *in our homes*, with family and friends.

the toxic effects of the poison of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Obsession over the latter – *i.e.* evil [Hebrew *ra*] - is the thing that most cripples man. Fallen men think they see both good and evil, but their fallen minds really only pay attention to evil side of the equation. They start to worry because they see tares. They begin to fret because they see swarming insects. They succumb to fear because they see foraging creatures of the night. They get outraged because they see villains and thieves coming to steal, kill, and destroy. What we are supposed to see is the good the Holy One is doing. We are supposed to see a good harvest, ready to come forth despite the evil in the world and the sinister plans and dark conspiracies of bad men. As ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are called to teach the nations to see the good harvest about to come forth as well.

Finally, look at the instructions Moshe gives us regarding the moon cycle in which *aviv* appears on the earth through the I Corinthians 3:12-13 lens. What of what occurs in the *aviv* cycle of the moon each year is *gold* – *i.e.* of pre-Fall Divine origin and eternal value]? What of what occurs in this month is *silver* – *i.e.* the product of co-laboring between the Holy One and man? And what, on the other hand, is *wood, hay* and *straw/stubble* – which the Holy One intends to burn up with the Consuming Fire of His Presence? Can you *sh'ma* what the *Ruach* is saying, and *re'eh* what the Creator is doing? Or are you just thinking about planning a *seder, taking a day off work, changing your diet, and celebrating Passover* and the seven days of matzah?

The Key Elements of the Pilgrimage of Aviv

At the center of the *sh'mar*-ing of the season of *aviv* is the commemoration of our *deliverance from bondage*. We are told to remember and actively relive/commemorate the time and the way in which our glorious redemption story began. As the Moshe put it, the goal of our *sh'mar*-ing of the moon-cycle of *aviv* is that each of us will ***remember the day in which [we] came out of the land of Egypt all the days of [our] life.*** Deuteronomy 16:3. This season is designed to refresh in our minds and thoughts the delicious sense of awe and wonder we felt when we ate our first meal as free men, when we walked dry-shod through the Sea of Reeds, and when we watched the Egyptians who had cruelly oppressed us disappear beneath the waves.

Moshe's instructions on this important season of reconnection with our redeemed identity, mission, and purpose are as follows:

***Cherish and safeguard the moon-cycle in which grain heads appear,
and make Passover as unto the Holy One your Lord -
since it was in the month of the heading of grain
that the Holy One your God brought you out from Egyptian darkness.***

In Moshe's enlightened, inspired state of revelation he sees that true worship of the Holy One begins with going up to Jerusalem to experience – and testify concerning - the miracle of *Passover*. The foundational Divine Appointment upon which all interaction with the Bridegroom of Heaven is to be based is the commemoration of the season of new grain when barley begins to ripen and the first sprouts of wheat begin to emerge from the soil. In this regard, Moshe instructs us specifically in regard to two primary elements of our commemoration. First, we are to *slaughter a sheep or a goat as our korban Pesach and bring it before Him in one particular place – i.e. the place the Holy One chooses for His Name*. Second, we are to *observe a weeklong fast of everything containing chametz [leaven]*. During the same seven-day period we are fasting *chametz* we are to *eat matzah* [unleavened bread]. We are to learn through this the spiritual principle that the life of the redeemed is to carry with it none of the leaven of Egypt.

To grasp this spiritual principle effectively one must understand a little about the bread-making process in days gone by. Until relatively recently bread was an absolute staple of life. Bread was baked and eaten every day. To make sure that tomorrow there would be the kind of bread flavor to which one's family was accustomed, a bread maker would hold back from the dough he or she was kneading a small batch of dough which he or she could use as a *starter* for tomorrow's batch. This was called 'old dough leavening'. The next day flour and water were added to this left-over batch of dough, and as the new ingredients were kneaded together with the old dough, as Shaul of Tarsus described it, '*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*'.

Using old dough leavening was designed to make a cook's bread taste and look much the same every day. The way the process worked was that the old dough would *ferment* overnight – meaning that germs contained in the minute organisms floating in the air, as well as the inorganic constituents of the water, and the protoplasm in the yeast would start to decompose the starch and gluten of the flour. This process of decomposition is accompanied by a release of gases into the dough that results in a 'rising' effect.

Let's recap. The process of old-dough leaven begins with the absorption by the dough of polluting organisms floating in the atmosphere and carried by the water. These pollutants act upon the pure grain molecules in such a way as to cause them to decompose and lose their natural essence, texture, and fragrance. Now do you get it? We are the grain. Egyptian bondage is the atmosphere. The Nile, polluted with the blood of innocents, is the water. The fermentation process is destroying us, making us look and act and smell like Egypt instead of who we really are.

Something has to break the cycle. And that something is *Pesach* [Passover]. At *Pesach* we throw out every bit of leftover dough and start over from scratch.

At *Pesach* each year we are called forth by the Holy One to totally *break off the chains and shackles of sameness*. Just as we are called to break free of bondage to the world's value systems we are called to simultaneously *break free of old ways of approaching and looking at life, old, stale dreams, and old, limited, myopic vision*. We are called to leave behind the 'old dough' batch of leaven – our old ways of looking at and doing things – and move on closer to our destiny. We are to make sure none of the seeds of our old, polluted, environmentally infused outlook on life are allowed to remain and affect our future. For as Torah puts it:

V'lo-yera'eh lecha se'or b'chol-gevulcha shiv'at yamim
No leavening shall be seen with you in all your borders for seven days.

V'lo-yalin min-ha-basar
And do not let the flesh

asher tizbach b'erev bayom ha-rishon l'boker
that you sacrificed in the evening of the first day remain overnight until morning.
[Deuteronomy 16:1-4]

The Other Seasons of Pilgrimage We are To Observe Each Year

Second on our calendar of pilgrimage festivals is *Shavuot* [Pentecost/Weeks]. This special season coinciding with the wheat harvest commemorates the day of our betrothal to the Holy One at Mt Sinai – the day when He gave us the Torah as a *ketuvah*. It also looks forward to the days when the *Ruach* [breath, spirit] of the Bridegroom-King will be poured out on all flesh and when the firstfruits of all nations in which the Seed of the Word of the Holy One have been sown will come to Jerusalem to celebrate before the Great King. Specifically we are told:

Sh'mar the Feast of Weeks to the Holy One your God
with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand,
which you are to give as the Holy One your God blesses you.
And rejoice before the Holy One your God,
you and your son and your daughter,
your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns,
the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you,
at the place that the Holy One your God will choose to make his name dwell.
[Deuteronomy 16:10-11]

What are we to remember/commemorate at *Shavuot*? We are to remember that we *were slaves in Egypt*. **Deuteronomy 16:12**. Far more than all the traditions, customs and pleasures of *Shavuot*, this one fact – a part of our history that shapes our future and our mission – is to be kept in the forefront of our mind. By coming to Jerusalem at *Shavuot* – at the height of the wheat harvest, when the rest of the world is busy in their fields - we are to testify to the world that we have something

far more valuable than a wheat crop: we have received – and are the firstfruits of – redemption! We are not to go alone. We are to take our son and our daughter. We are to take our manservants and maidservants. We are to take the Levi'im that reside in our gates. We are to take the foreigners who live among us and who want to go. We are to take the fatherless. We are to take the widow. And the world is supposed to watch us do something very, very important – they are to watch us REJOICE!

What are we to *sh'mar* – i.e. cherish, delight in, and carefully guard – each year at Shavuot? We are to *sh'mar* the Holy One's statutes. In the season that the world is obsessing over the ingredients of physical bread, we are to proclaim to the world that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Holy One.

Third, there is *Sukkot* [Tabernacles], the celebration of the Holy One's Presence and provision during the wilderness wandering, and of longing for the Messianic Kingdom and the World-to-Come. Regarding this grand celebration Moshe tells us:

*When you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress.
Rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter,
your male servant and your female servant,
the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.
Sh'mar the feast for seven days unto the Holy One your God
at the place that the Holy One will choose,
because the Holy One your God will bless you
in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.*
[Deuteronomy 16:12(b)-15]

After discussing each of these Grand Events on the King's Calendar specifically Moshe will then conclude his words of instruction by summarizing the purpose of the three pilgrimage festivals our Divine Bridegroom has ordained for us as follows:

*Three times a year [Sh'losh pe'amim b'shanah]
all your males are to appear [yera'eh chol-zchurecha]
before the Holy One your God [et-penei Adonai Eloheicha]
at the place which he will choose [b'makom asher yivchar] -
At the feast of **Matzahs** [b'chag ha-Matzot],
and at the feast of **Shavuot** [uv'chag ha-Shavu'ot],
and at the feast of **Sukkot** [uv'chag ha-Sukot];
And they are not to appear [v'lo yera'eh]
before the Holy One empty [et-penei Adonai reykam];
every man is to bring gifts in hand [Ish kematnat yado]
to draw near to the Holy One your God [kevirkat Adonai Eloheicha]*

as the Holy One has given gifts to you [asher natan-lach]
[Deuteronomy 16:16-17]

A Radical Concept: An Eternal Connection to a City

We now understand that every single year of our life, at these three specified seasons, we as the Holy One's people are called to drop whatever we may be doing – put aside daily affairs of life as of secondary importance – leave our homes, and travel 'up to Jerusalem'. And it is not just about laying aside our ordinary affairs of life and making a journey. We are called to take some things with us when we go. Just as we took gold, silver and precious garments with us when the Holy One redeemed us from Egypt and carried us to Sinai, all of which were to be incorporated in the Mish'kan [Tabernacle], so are we are instructed to bring with us specific things to be used for specified purposes each time we make the pilgrimage up to Jerusalem. We are not going for a vacation or a party. We are going to build a stage.

You see, Dear Reader, we have a great "passion play" to perform before the nations. The streets of Jerusalem make up the aisles. The Radiant Presence of the Divine Bridegroom provides the lighting. We are the actors. The play is to be performed each and every year in the same streets, at the same appointed times, in the same way. One generation after another, climbing the same hills, treading the same pathways, breathing the same air - Forever. Now this is a truly *radical concept*. This goes way beyond studying Hebrew roots, listening to Messianic music, and purchasing a little Judaica to decorate one's home. If we actually **do** something like this, we will be considered CRAZY by the world around us. They will surely think we are a bunch of *religious fanatics*. And what is it all for? So that we will be *eternally connected to a city in the Judean hills of Israel, in the territorial allotment of Benjamin*. This is so we will never forget, and always long for, *Y'rushalayim* [KJV 'JERUSALEM']. What is it, we should rightfully ask, that is so special about this city that our Divine Bridegroom wants it to become a major part of our life and worship? Why not Bethlehem, or Bethany, or for that matter, Birmingham, Baton Rouge or Boston? Why JERUSALEM? *Oy vey* – Jerusalem doesn't even have an international airport!

But ...Why Jerusalem?

Let us look for a few moments at what Scripture tells us of this place, and see why an intimate and eternal connection with this city is an essential part of the *sh'ma* lifestyle, and why we cannot be who we were called to be without going there. In Torah Jerusalem is referenced as the city of *Salem*. It is the place where Melchizedek was king and priest. It is thus the place where Avraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all the Holy One had given him of the wealth of S'dom and G'morrah. **Genesis 14:18-20**. According to tradition Jerusalem is also the place [called

Ararat in Torah] where the ark came to rest after the floodwaters receded, and where Noach built his altar to, and made a 'new covenant' with, the Holy One. **Genesis 8:20 – 9:17**. Also according to tradition Jerusalem is the place [called Moriyah in Torah] where Avraham set up an altar, and was prepared to sacrifice Yitzchak, but was prevented from doing so when the Holy One miraculously provided a ram caught in a thicket. See **Genesis 22**. As you will recall, after that event Avraham prophesied: “*on the mountain of the Holy One, He will be seen.*” **Genesis 22:14**. And likewise according to tradition Jerusalem is the site [called *Beit-El* in Torah] where Ya'akov had his dream of angels ascending to and descending from [Genesis 28:10-22], and where he covenanted to build the Holy One a house, and bring Him tithes of all the Holy One would give to him.

In our aliyah Moshe refers to this place only euphemistically and prophetically - as “*ha-makom asher yivchar Adonai*” - the place the Holy One shall choose to place His Name”. Somehow Jerusalem is eternally connected to the NAME of the Holy One. No wonder it is called *the City of the Great King*. It is the place [*ha makom*] in all the earth where His Name is most revered.

In Psalm 2 we are told that Jerusalem - and particularly *Mount Tziyon* - is the capital city of Messiah, the place of His Throne, and from which He will reign.

I have set my king on my holy hill of Tziyon.

Now therefore be wise, you kings. Be instructed, you judges of the eretz.

Serve the Holy One with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled.

Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.

[Psalm 2:6, 10-12]

In Psalm 132 we are told that Jerusalem is the Holy One's *chosen city* and His *resting place forever*:

The Holy One has chosen Tziyon. He has desired it for his habitation.

"This is my resting place forever. Here I will live, for I have desired it.

I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread.

Her Kohanim I will also clothe with salvation.

Her holy ones will shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn of David to bud.

[Psalm 132:13-18]

In Psalm 48 we read that the Holy One has made, and will make, Jerusalem a city of blessing - for all nations, all tribes, and all tongues:

... the joy of the whole eretz is Mount Tziyon,

on the north side of the city of the great King.

God has shown himself in her citadels as a refuge.

[Psalm 48:2]

In Psalm 50 the Holy One tells us: that Jerusalem is the place where the Holy One receives visitors, appears in splendor, and holds court:

Out of Tziyon, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes, and does not keep silent.

A fire devours before him. It is very tempestuous around him.

He calls to the heavens above, to the erez, that he may judge his people:

"Gather my holy ones together to me - those who have cut⁵ a covenant with Me.

[Psalm 50:2-5]

We are also told:

*God will save Tziyon, and will build the cities of Judah:
that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.*

[Psalm 69:35]

And Yeshayahu [Isaiah] told us:

This is what Yeshayahu the son of Amotz saw concerning Y'hudah and Y'rushalayim.

It will happen in the latter days,

that the mountain of the Holy One's house will be established on the top of the mountains,

And will be raised above the hills; and all nations will flow to it.

Many people groups/ethnicities will go and say, "Come, let's go up

to the mountain of the Holy One,

to the house of the God of Ya`akov;

And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

For out of Tziyon the Torah will go forth,

and the word of the Holy One from Y'rushalayim.

[Isaiah 2:1-3]

The prophet Yoel [Joel] says:

The Holy One will roar from Tziyon, and will thunder from Y'rushalayim;

And the heavens and the erez will shake;

But the Holy One will be a refuge to his people, and a stronghold to the children of Yisra'el.

"So you will know that I am the Holy One, your God,

Dwelling in Tziyon, my holy mountain.

Then Y'rushalayim will be holy, and no strangers will pass through her anymore.

It will happen in that day, that the mountains will drop down sweet wine,

The hills will flow with milk,

All the brooks of Y'hudah will flow with waters;

And a fountain will come forth from the house of the Holy One,

And will water the valley of Shittim.

Y'hudah will be inhabited forever, and Y'rushalayim from generation to generation.

⁵ Most translations render this phrase "by sacrifice". The Hebrew word I have rendered "cut" and which most translations render "by sacrifice" is the Hebrew word *zebach* [zayin, beit, chet], Strong's Hebrew word #2077, pronounced *zeh'-bakh*. It is first used in Torah in Genesis 31:54, to describe the slaughter of animals in connection with a *covenant meal* [in this instance, when Ya'akov cut covenant with Lavan, at Galeed].

*I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed:
For the Holy One dwells in Tziyon."*

[Joel 3:16-21]

Zechariah prophesied of Jerusalem as well, saying:

*Thus says the Holy One of Hosts: "I am jealous for Tziyon with great jealousy,
and I am jealous for her with great wrath."*

*Thus says the Holy One: "I am returning to Tziyon,
and will dwell in the midst of Y'rushalayim.*

*Y'rushalayim will be called 'The City of Truth;'
and the mountain of the Holy One of Hosts, 'The Holy Mountain.'"*

Thus says the Holy One of Hosts:

*"Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country;
and I will bring them, and they will dwell in the midst of Y'rushalayim;
and they will be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."*

[Zechariah 8:2-3,7-8]

And in the Book of Revelation Yochanan tells us:

*I saw the holy city, New Y'rushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God,
made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.*

*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls,
who were loaded with the seven last plagues came, and he spoke with me, saying,
"Come here. I will show you the wife, the Lamb's bride."*

*He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain,
and showed me the holy city, Y'rushalayim,
coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.*

*The city has no need for the sun, neither of the moon, to shine,
for the very glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.
The nations will walk in its light.*

*The kings of the eretz will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
Its gates will in no way be shut by day (for there will be no night there),
and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it
so that they may enter.*

*There will in no way enter into it anything profane,
or one who causes an abomination or a lie,
but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

[Revelation 21]

There is a *reason* our Divine Bridegroom called upon us to come up to Jerusalem – to make Jerusalem the focus of our faith, and the ‘stage’ for our most intense acts of worship. Jerusalem is a *portal into another realm*. What we are to do there is not only significant for us – it is significant for all nations, all tongues, all tribes, all who are now living, and all who will yet live. For there, more than anywhere else, we KIDDUSH ADONAI – *i.e.* SANCTIFY THE NAME of the Holy One. There, more than any other place, is where we *re'eh* [Behold] His beauty, His majesty, His

goodness, and His glory.

We Are Participating In Prophetic Rehearsals!

Jerusalem has been ordained by the Holy One as a stage. He has made it the most visible, and the most famous, city in the world. The “festivals” he called us to celebrate there, on that stage, have been designed by the Holy One as a perennially playing *multi-act Divine Drama*, dramatically portraying the Holy One’s redemptive plan for mankind. The actors in this play are the Holy One’s people. He is the playwright, the Ruach HaQodesh is the producer, and the Messiah is the Director. The Messianic Kingdom will be the “*grand finale*”.

Each festival is a ‘remembrance’, a ‘re-enactment’. At *Pesach*, we re-enact the events of our redemption from Egypt. We have a script, provided by Torah, for us to read. At *Shavuot* [the feast called Pentecost] we re-enact the betrothal covenant of Mount Sinai, where we stood under our Divine Bridegroom’s *chuppah*, and pledged our troth to Him, and where He spoke prophetically and creatively over us as a Bride-to-be. Like married couples who renew their wedding vows on each anniversary, we re-enact our Betrothal to the Holy One, and declare anew that all He has said “we will *asah*, and we will *sh’ma*” – according to the script we find in Exodus 19-20. At *Sukkot* [the feast called *Tabernacles*], we re-enact the experience of the Holy One’s overshadowing Presence in the wilderness, as we dwelt in 42 separate encampments between Egypt and the Jordan River crossing. At each of those encampments the Holy One rained manna on us from heaven, provided miraculous supplies of water, and protected us from our enemies. We commemorate it as a time when the Holy One alone was our King, and we were totally dependent upon Him.

Appointments to Spend Uninterrupted Lavishing Love and Attention On,

And Receiving Lavish Love and Attention From Our Bridegroom-King

These “festivals” are also to be *mo’edim* - *Scheduled Appointments* - where each generation of the Holy One’s people, forever, are to meet with the Holy One on the same terms, and with the same purposes, as He met with the first generation He redeemed from Egypt. These festivals are a *witness unto us* [the root word of *mo’ed* is *ed*, pronounced *ayd*, meaning ‘witness’], and between us and the Holy One, that we are covenant partners now, just as we were then.

These festivals are times the Holy One *meets with us* and *covenants anew with us* - to do again what He did before. They therefore *look forward* as well as back. They are not just commemorations of events that occurred long ago involving our ancestors – they are celebrations of events that we have complete assurance *will*

occur in the future, because the Holy One has made an eternal covenant with us, and will perform it to its fullest.

As all Israel was saved from Egypt, all Israel *will be* saved from ‘this world’. As all Israel met with the Holy One at Sinai, and became betrothed to Him there as a kingdom of priests, an *am k’dosh* [holy nation], and an *am segulah* [precious possession], so all Israel will have the Torah written on their hearts, and will love Him and serve Him and reign with Him with gladness and wisdom. As all Israel encamped under the Radiant Cloud of His Presence, ate His manna, and drank from His *mayim hayim* [living water] day-by-day, all Israel will bask in His Presence and His Provision in the Millennial reign of His Messiah. *Pesach* is *then*, it is *now*, and it is in the future. *Shavuot* is *past*, it is *present*, and *yet to come*. *Sukkot* was, is today, and will be again. By stopping our work and normal lives on these days, and meeting with the Holy One, we step *outside of time*, into the realm where the Holy One dwells. We enter, as it were, a ‘time warp’. We follow a script written for us in Heaven. May His Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven.

Not Your Ordinary Holidays or Harvest Festivals!

And though these festivals were focused upon *the harvests* of the land of Israel, the Holy One had His people do something strange – He had them declare work stoppages *right when the harvest was in full swing!* Why? Because He wanted all His people to know - and declare - that He, and not their labor, is the source of every good thing. And the Holy One wants us to understand – and to proclaim to all the world – the truth that *one day in His Courts is better than thousands elsewhere*. We are all intended to share the passion of the Psalmist, who declared:

***One thing I ask of the Holy One, this is what I seek;
That I may dwell in the house of the Holy One all the days of my life,
To gaze upon the beauty of the Holy One, and to seek Him in His Temple.***

[Psalm 27:4]

Re’eh, Beloved. Lift up your spiritual eyes, and *Behold!!* And then come, let us go up together ... to *Jerusalem!*

Questions For Today’s Study

1. The first *mo’ed* discussed in today’s aliyah is the *Pesach* [Passover].
[A] In what month is the *Pesach* to be celebrated?
[B] What historical event does the *Pesach* celebration commemorate?
[C] List each of the things the Holy One instructs us to do (in today’s aliyah) to celebrate the *Pesach*.
2. Which two celebrations besides ***Pesach*** call for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem?
3. What did the Holy One say the men are to bring with them when they went to

Jerusalem to observe these feasts?

4. The second *mo'ed* discussed in today's aliyah is ***Shavuot***.

[A] How are we to know what day to observe *Shavuot*?

[B] List the things the Holy One instructs us to do (in today's aliyah) to celebrate *Shavuot*.

[C] List the groups of people with whom we are told to celebrate *Shavuot*.

5. The third *mo'ed* discussed in today's aliyah is ***Sukkot***.

[A] At the time of the harvest of which crops are we to observe *Sukkot*?

[B] For how many days are we to celebrate this *mo'ed*?

[C] List the things the Holy One instructs us to do (in today's aliyah) to celebrate *Sukkot*.

[D] List the groups of people with whom we are told to celebrate *Sukkot*.

6. In today's concluding passage of Haftarah *Re'eh* Yeshayahu [Isaiah] says that David has been made a "witness" to (or against) the peoples.

***Behold, I have given him for a witness⁶ to the peoples,
a leader⁷ and commander⁸ to the peoples.
Behold, you will call a nation⁹ that you don't know;
and a nation that didn't know you will run to you, because of the Holy One your God,
and for the Holy One of Yisra'el; for He has glorified¹⁰ you.***
[Isaiah 55:4-5]

[A] How has David [or his descendants?] become a witness to (or against) the nations of the earth, as well as a leader/commander [literally, an appointed messenger to set things in order and then rule over them]?

[B] What does Yeshayahu say in Isaiah 54:5 that the Holy One has done for Israel?

⁶ The word English Bibles translate as "witness" in this passage is ***ed*** [*ayin, dalet*], Strong's Hebrew word #5707, pronounced ***ayd***. It is first used in Genesis 31:44,48, to describe the monument or boundary stone set up by Ya'akov and Lavan to be a "witness" between them. In that case, it spoke to them "do not go past this point".

⁷ The word our English Bibles translate as *leader* in this passage is ***nagiyd*** [nun, gimel, yod, dalet], Strong's #H5057, pronounced ***naw-gheed'***. It is first found in the TaNaKh in I Samuel 9:16, to describe *Shaul* [Saul], Israel's first king.

⁸ The word which our English Bibles translate "commander" in this passage is ***tzavah*** [*tzade, vav, hey*], Strong's Hebrew word #6680, pronounced ***tsaw-vaw'***. It is first used in Genesis 2:16, to describe the Holy One as an instructor in righteousness.

⁹ The word our English Bibles translate as *nation* in this passage is ***goy*** [*gimel, vav, yod*], Strong's Hebrew word #1471, pronounced ***go'-ee***. The first Biblical usage is in Genesis 10. It generally refers to *any ethnic group other than Hebrews*.

¹⁰ The word our English Bibles translate as *glorified* in this passage is ***pa'ar*** [*peh, alef, resh*], Strong's Hebrew word #6286, pronounced ***paw-ar'***. Biblically, it means to *be over, or overshadow* something. See Exodus 8:9 [Pharaoh standing over, overshadowing Moshe – or attempting to].

[C] For what reason, according to Yeshayahu, will the ‘*nation Israel did not know*’ run to her?

7. In the reading for today from the letters penned by Yeshua’s talmidim, Yochanan [John], continues his discussion of anti-Messiah spirits.

*They are of the world*¹¹. *Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them.*

We are of God. He who knows God listens to [sh'ma's] us.

He who is not of God doesn't listen to [lo sh'ma's] us.

By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

[I John 4:5]

[A] From where does Yochanan say the spirits of AntiMessiah come?

[B] Who does Yochanan say listens to such spirits?

[C] Read John 17:14-18. What does Yeshua have to say about the subject of the relationship between *us* and “the world”?

[D] Who is the *Spirit of truth* referred to by Yochanan in verse 4:6?

[E] Who is the *spirit of falsehood* referred to by Yochanan in verse 4:6?

[Hint: Look at John 14:15-17 and John 14:25-26; then look at John 8:42-47]

[F] How does Yochanan say we can *recognize* [Greek *g'nosko*, meaning intimately know by close interaction with a person or thing] the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of falsehood?

May you play your part in each Act of the Holy One's Divine Drama.

Shabbat Shalom!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 16:1-11

Preserve me, O Holy One, for in you I take refuge.

My soul, you have said to the Holy One

"You are my Lord. Apart from you I have no good thing."

As for the holy ones who are in the eretz,

they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

Their sorrows shall be multiplied who give gifts to another god.

Their drink-offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take their names on my lips.

The Holy One assigned my portion and my cup. You made my lot secure.

¹¹ The word our English Bibles translate as *world* is *kosmos*, Strong's #G2889. This colloquial expression is used by apostolic writers to mean *the ungodly multitude*, or *the realm in which man's thinking is given precedence and valued over the Torah*. Yeshua taught us we are to be *the light of the kosmos*. **Matthew 5:14**. He also taught us that, in the parable of *the sower and the seed*, the *kosmos* is the *field in which the sower went out to sow*. **Matthew 13:38**. The *kosmos* is also the realm the sin of which Y'shua, the Lamb of the Holy One, came to take away. **John 1:29**. It is the kingdoms of the *kosmos* that will become the kingdoms of the Holy One and His Messiah. **Revelation 11:15**.

The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. Yes, I have a good inheritance.

I will bless the Holy One who has given me counsel.

Yes, my heart instructs me in the night seasons.

I have set the Holy One always before me.

Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices.

My body shall also dwell in safety, for you will not leave my soul in She'ol,

Neither will you allow your holy one to see corruption.

You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy.

In your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.