

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Shoftim:*** **Deuteronomy 17:14 - 18:8**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 51:17-20**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:21**

Set over yourselves the king the Holy One your God chooses.

[Deuteronomy 17:15]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 94:12-16;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 2nd Petition, T'shuvah [The Prayer of Repentance]

Ki-tavo el-ha-aretz - *When you come into the land ...* ***asher Adonai Eloheicha noten lach*** – *that the Holy One your God is entrusting to you in stewardship ...* ***virishtah v'yashavtah bah*** – *and you have possessed it and settled in ...* ***v'amarta asimah alay melech*** – *then you will say, 'Let appoint a king'* **Deuteronomy 17:14a.**

We are in shock – if not awe. Moshe's 'Diverging Pathways' Discourse is blowing us away, and his vision for establishment of a 'Heaven-Scented Society' on earth is capturing our hearts. Today he will introduce yet another critical area of divergence between *our King's narrow path of life, health, peace,* and blessing and the *broad road that leads the nations to destruction.*

Governmental Infrastructure and Administration – Kingdom Style!

The specific area of distinction that Moshe wants to talk about today is the gnarly realm of civil government. The nations are obsessed with this subject. They debate it. They pontificate about it. They foment movements to reform it - and rebellions to replace it. They wage wars over it. They quote every loud-mouthed pseudo-intellectual or tyrant who has ever voiced an opinion on or raised a sword because of it - from Nimrod, to Cicero, to Plato and Aristotle, to Machiavelli, to Augustine and Aquinas, to Hobbes and Locke, to Bossuet and Rousseau, to Jefferson and Hamilton, to Hitler and Hirohito, to Marx, and to Soros – but somehow each form of it they build with winds up turning into an Orwellian Oceania. Not knowing, much less trusting, the Holy One, they fixate on form and obsess over how to maintain political and economic and manipulate the populace to serve them and the idols they rode in on. They fret over evildoers. They worry incessantly about – and debate with vigor – platforms, policies, and programs. They make up narratives to suit their agendas. They formulate slogans for their brainwashed minions to chant on cue. They rewrite history. They redefine terms to manipulate public opinion. They make demi-

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gods out of chieftains and warlords, monarchs, dictators, and celebrities. They pledge their allegiance to, and build towers, cities, statues, and shrines to venerate, pacifist-idealists as well as generals; activists, revolutionaries, and anarchists as well as nationalists; socialist and communists as well as capitalists; and cold-blooded killers as well as law-and-order candidates. They dedicate days – and name streets, schools and ships – after them. But what is the kind of nonsense the nations – i.e. those who know not the Holy One - do. What about us? When we settle into our own land, and have our own nation-state, replete with geographical boundaries and infrastructure, *what form of government will we choose to establish?* *Spoiler alert* - it is going to be a process. Ultimately, we know, all the government systems and political theories of the fallen world – based as they are in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than in the tree of life – are destined to rise and fall, prosper for a while then collapse in a great heap. One by one they will self-destruct. No matter how much hope, idealism, human ingenuity, patriotism, or military they have started with, they are eventually all decay, crumble, and implode. A few generations of influence at best and then ‘poof’ – their populace will come unmoored from their founders’ values and their strength will fail them. **See Isaiah 21:9; Revelation 14:8 and 18:2.** One day, we know, we will be called to pack up our families and meager possessions and make a hasty, ‘*Lot’s-Family*’-style exit out of whichever of these flawed world systems we happen to sojourn [see **Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34; II Corinthians 6:17; and Revelation 18:4**]. Our assignment on earth transcends any government, any ideology, any political theory, any economic system, any social compact, or any religious movement. Our calling is to faithfully model the majesty, *shalom*, efficiency, and goodness of a theocracy ruled by the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov and governed by Messiah to the people who are being traumatized by the political, economic, cultural, religious systems of the world. But alas, that mission does not become a success overnight. The Holy One’s way will be the ‘way not traveled’ for a long, long time. We will have to learn some hard lessons about just about every kind of governmental system, political theory, and socio-economic construct the nations around us can think up along the way. It appears that that we are going to be slow learners – and will wind up having to learn firsthand, the hard way, why man-conceived theories of government, politics, science, and economy do *NOT*, and *can never*, bring the Will of the Creator or the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. Only after we learn these hard lessons will we see any need to – much less be qualified to - teach and demonstrate to the world what form and priorities of government *WILL*.

What kind of ‘government’, ‘political theory’, and ‘socio-economic construct’ will we experience throughout history? Here are a few:

- Deliverers
- Judges
- Priests
- Kings
- A Supposedly ‘United’ Monarchy in an Intermittent State of Civil War
- A Divided Monarchy in a Constant State of Tribal War
- Prophets – real and false
- Hellenist Assimilators
- Warlike Maccabees
- Cruel Tetrarchs
- Warring Camps of Sadducees and Pharisees
- Revolutionary Activists like Barabbas and Simon Bar Khokba
- Conquerors, Occupying Armies, Exiles, Empires and Caliphates
- Popes, Crusades, and Inquisitions
- Shtetl Straw Bosses and Ghetto Enforcers
- Tzars, Cossacks, and Pogroms
- Ideology-Crazed Idealists Spouting ‘Socialism’
- Bloody Bolshevics
- Race and Culture Obsessed Fascists
- Fuhrers and Concentration Camp Commandants
- Money-Hungry Capitalists
- Power-Hungry Communists
- Control-Freak Generals
- Outraged Anarchists
- Self-Righteous Deists
- Self-Promoting Republics spouting ‘manifest destiny’
- Partisan and Special-Interest Dominated ‘Democracies’
- Technocraciess
- Leagues of Nations
- Globalism Promoters and One-World-Order Totalitarians
- Artificial Intelligence Systems Enforcing the Decrees of ‘Big Brother’

Oy veh - Enough already! Send Messiah now! *Bring on the Kingdom of Heaven!*

But One Day ... We Will Have A King!
Melech Asher Yivchar Adonai Eloheicha

Once we get established in *Eretz Yisrael*, Moshe prophesies, there will come a time when we will say to ourselves: ***asimah alai melech k’chol-ha-goyim asher sevivotai*** – *i.e. we will enthrone a king - as the peoples around us have done.* **Deuteronomy 17:14.** But wait ... how can this be? The Holy One has made it clear that His Plan for us is that we are to *lead* the nations - not follow them. We are not here to learn from the peoples/nations around us; they are, instead, supposed

to learn from us. We are to be a burning and shining *light* for the nations and all this planet's ethnicities and cultures - not a looking glass reflection of them. We are to be a *voice of wisdom and understanding, counsel, and might, knowledge and yirat Adonai* - not an echo of man adulation. We are to be a beautiful, free-flowing model of the Kingdom of Heaven – not guinea pigs in a laboratory of where humanistic political theories of leadership are tested. We are to be an *inspiration to the nations and peoples of earth*, not an imitation of them. We are never to look to the nations – or their poets, philosophers, philanthropists; or their preachers, priests, or prophets; or their presidents, prime ministers, or kings - for innovation. They are, instead to look to and receive innovation from us. We are called to be a different kind of people – a 'light to the nations'. We are called to serve the Holy One as a 'kingdom of priests' and a 'holy nation'. We are not to do anything after the pattern/model of the pagan nations. Are we? The answer is 'no' ... and 'yes'! Let me explain.

Moshe cautions us to recognize only a king that the Holy One has chosen for us. *Melech asher yivchar Adonai Eloheicha* - i.e. *the king that Adonai your God shall choose*. Ah, so there it is. The Kingdom pathway will include a kingdom – and a king – but with a major twist. Much more will be revealed about the substance of that 'twist' later in the shiur. But for now, Moshe wants us to know that it all starts with the selection process. We will indeed have a king – but the Holy One, not us, will choose, appoint, and enthrone him. See Psalm 2:6: *Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Tziyon*.

The *d'varim* of Moshe are *inspired words*. They are *forever words*. They are at work every moment, actively defining and giving perspective to our past, shaping our present circumstances, and determining the impact we can – and will – have upon the world in every year, every season, every decade, and every generation. Moshe's *d'varim* are designed to become more and more relevant to us – and more and more inspirational to the world as they operate in us - as the stages of our collective life journey proceed and as the phases of our unique life experience unfold in real time. They are prophecy as well as history. They just keep coming. They just keep unfolding. They just keep changing the world. So when in today's aliyah Moshe speaks to us of a king, if we know what is good for us and for the world in which we live, we really need to perk up our ears, and *sh'ma*. And when Moshe tells us plainly: *you will surely set a king over you whom the Holy One your God chooses; one from among your brethren you will set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother*; well, *look out world*. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Tziyon! Shout, O daughter of Y'rushalayim!
Behold, your King is coming to you.*

[Zechariah 9:9]

*And it will come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations
that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year
to worship the King, the Holy One of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

[Zechariah 14:13]

*He is Lord of lords and King of kings;
and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*

[Revelation 17:14(b)]

Welcome to the season of *preparing for the coronation of our King*, Dear Reader. Bring forth the purest of oil for His anointing. Get out the shofar for the great announcement. Prepare the banquet hall for a great celebration. Make the crooked way strait. Prepare the way of the Bridegroom-King!

Hail, King of the Jews!

Do you have a King, Beloved? I hope so. Torah instructs us to. Who is our King supposed to be? Our King is to be a Hebrew. He is to be the One the Holy One anoints, appoints, commissions, and installs in His Holy City. It is our privilege, and responsibility, to love, to crown, and to serve this King, and to do so every day, in every situation and way station of life. He is to be to us as 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh'. Whoever He says we can and should be for Him, we are to become. Whatever He says we can and should do, we are to do. He will personally live and walk at all times by - and will govern us and all His Kingdom according to - the Torah, and will lead us in doing the same.

“*Hail, King of the Jews!*” It has a *strange, unsettling ring* to it, doesn't it? After all, *kings* are ... well, they are *a little scary*. Most of what we have seen from and concerning kings in the history of the world is *not good*. They *rule for life*. They *do whatever they please*. All men are obligated to *do what they say* – whether the men understand it, like it, or agree with it or not. And they *take from ordinary people like us whatever they want, whenever and however they feel like it*. But nonetheless, if our king is the Bridegroom-King it will be our joy to know Him and our greatest delight to serve Him.

Moshe is preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of the Bridegroom-King. He is laying a foundation of expectation and enthusiasm for His arrival. We are, you see, called to be much more than a group of individuals individually striving to be a good, moral person. We are not called to be far more than just a holy *nation* – though that is one of our callings. Our ultimate calling is to become a *kingdom* – a kingdom of *kohanim* [i.e. royal emissaries of Heaven's King].

The vehicle the Holy One has chosen to inaugurate His rule upon the earth is not a democracy, or a religious organization, or an army-backed dictatorship. His

Grand Redemptive Plan involves Him coming and reigning as a wise, powerful and compassionate King, whose throne and rule is governed by the Torah. This, Beloved, is *the Kingdom of Heaven* of which Yeshua taught. A kingdom needs a king. Are you excited about yours? Moshe is. Moshe cannot wait to break the good news of the soon and coming King. The king about whom Moshe is prophesying is not Shaul. Nor is it David. It is none other than Messiah. To Him our lives belong. We are no longer our own. We no longer live for our own pleasure, or our own honor. If we love our King, we follow His decrees - and desire nothing more than to serve Him and His Kingdom at all times. Alas, as a fool is to be pitied, so is the man who thinks he has only a savior and not a king.

As it is in Heaven, so it shall be upon the earth. May it occur speedily, in our day!

Context, Context, Context

The ‘kingdom’ talk Moshe is about to give is a continuation of his description of the Divine pattern of government that the Divine Bridegroom has ordained for *Am Yisrael*. Moshe has already taught us about the local *shoftim* [judge-rulers] and *shotrim* [enforcers/administrators] the Holy One is going to provide for us in all our gates. Now he is ready to speak to us of a different and much more pervasive source of influence upon our lives – one whose visible advent lies far, far down the road.

Remember, just because something is *unseen* at a given time does not mean it does not exist. The Holy One has created, and governs, that which is unseen as well as that which is seen.

The Ultimate Constitutional Monarchy – Can you See It, Or Can’t You?

When *Am Yisrael* comes into possession of the promised land, Moshe makes it clear, it is not going to remain forever a loose federation of tribes. Once in the land, Israel is to become a NATION – a *goy k’dosh* [a holy nation], and a *mam’lekeh kohanim* [a kingdom of priests]. In other words, once in possession of the land, the Holy One has ordained for us to have a *central government* – with *Torah as our constitution*. It is in our capacity *as a nation*, as well as in our capacities as individuals and as families, you see, that we are to function as ‘*a light to the nations*²’ of the world.

Today’s aliyah covers two elements of the Divinely established form of government that the Holy One expects and empowers us to establish in Eretz

² The Hebrew phrase commonly translated ‘*light to the nations*’ is *ohr l’goyim*.

Yisrael. In addition to the *shoftim* and *shotrim* he told us in yesterday's aliyah that we were to station in our gates, we find out today that we are to have a *king who will be unlike any other king*, and a special *tribe that will be unlike any other tribe*.

Introducing Melech Yisrael – the King of Israel

Moshe prophesies that at some point, far in the future, after *B'nei Yisrael* [the descendants of Israel] have settled in the land, there will arise among the people a clamor to have a king [Hebrew *melek* - *mel'-ayk* - an enthroned royal leader] "*like the nations around them*". Moshe then makes a startling announcement – the Holy One has a King already picked out for us – and He is *one of our brethren!*

Never forget, especially as we prepare for the High Holy Days [*Yom T'ruah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Chag-ha-Sukkot*], that the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov has always had a *king* and a *kingdom* in mind for Israel. He has it all planned out. And He is committed to bring it to pass. Here are a few of the things He instructed the prophets to tell us about the ultimate King which the God of Torah has in mind for us:

***Tell the daughter of Tziyon, 'Behold, your King is coming to you,
lowly, and sitting on a donkey – a colt, the foal of a donkey.'***
[Zechariah 9:9]

***And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west, making a very large valley***

* * *

Thus the Holy One my God will come, and all the saints with You.

* * *

***And the Holy One shall be King over all the earth.
In that day it shall be - "The Lord is one, and His name one.***
[Zechariah 14:4-9]

***... in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came
to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?
For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him."***

***When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Y'rushalayim with him.
And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together,
he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.***

So they said to him, "In Beit-Lechem of Y'hudah, for thus it is written by the prophet:

***'But you, Beit-Lechem, in the land of Y'hudah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Y'hudah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'***

***Then the soldiers of the governor took Yeshua into the Praetorium
and gathered the whole garrison around Him.
And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.***

*When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head,
and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him
and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, **King of the Jews!**"*

[Matthew 27:29]

And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:

THIS IS YESHUA, THE KING OF THE JEWS

[Matthew 27:36]

*I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire,
and those who have the victory over the beast,
over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name,
standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.*

They sing the song of Moshe, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

"Great and marvelous are Your works, O Holy One, God Almighty!

Just and true are Your ways, O King of k'doshim!

Who shall not fear You, O Holy One, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.

For all nations shall come and worship before You,

For Your judgments have been manifested."

[Revelation 15:2-4]

I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.

*And He who sat on him was called **Faithful and True,***

and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.

He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

*He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called **the Word of God***

And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,

followed Him on white horses.

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.

And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.

He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

[Revelation 19:11-15]

Yes, there is indeed a king in our future. And where better than Torah for us to be instructed regarding His qualifications and what makes Him unlike any other king or ruler?

1. The Qualifications Torah Establishes for the Ultimate Melech Yisrael

Moshe makes it clear that if/when B'nei Yisrael has a king, that king must meet two criteria - one, he must be **from among the Israelites** (*a foreigner shall not rule over you*); second, he must be the one **whom the Holy One your God shall choose**³.

2. The Four Proscriptions Torah Imposes for a True Melech Yisrael

Moshe then states *four things that a true king of the people of the Holy One may*

³ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'choose' is *bachar*, pronounced *baw - kahr*'. It means to select by a process of testing, or appoint after a series of trials

not do, which separate him from all other kings. The idea that a king cannot do anything is a radical departure from the norm. Kings are ... well, kings. They do what they please. Proscriptions on behavior? To the world it is unthinkable! But we are not talking about the world's idea of a king – we are talking about the Creator of the Universe's idea of a king. And the Holy One thinks even kings – indeed ESPECIALLY kings – must always voluntarily subject themselves to Divine protocols of Kingdom Administration. Hence Moshe reveals that the king of Israel, unlike the kings of other nations, is to show outstanding self-restraint. He is not to acquire great numbers of horses for himself (some men trust in horses); nor is he permitted to send the people to Egypt to get horses for him (some men trust in chariots). Furthermore, the king of Israel is not permitted to multiply unto himself either wives or riches. If others choose to bring tribute to him, so be it -it is the blessing of the the Holy One. But he is not to seek, demand, or be motivated by such things.

These four proscriptions were however designed as only a small part of how Israel's king was designed to be unlike the kings of the surrounding nations. In two other particulars, Torah requires Israel's king to be vastly different.

3. Two More Distinguishing Features of a True Melech Yisrael

A. The Lifelong Student-of-Torah Requirement

First, this king of the people of the Holy One is directed to do something no other nation's king would ever be expected to do – he is to *write for himself [as a scribe] a scroll of all the d'varim [words of prophetic impartation] given by Moshe, and keep this scroll with him at all times, and read it every day of his life.* This writing, keeping/treasuring, and study is for two purposes: [a] so the king will learn to fear and reverence the Holy One; and [b] so he will be able to carefully follow all the decrees and judgments of the Holy One.

B. The Humble/Meek Servant-of-All Requirement

Second, the king is *not to consider himself better than his brother Israelites.* A *Melech Yisrael* is not to be like other kings, proud, haughty, or considering himself entitled to rule by reason of 'divine right' or birth into a royal family. A *Melech Yisrael* is to live the *sh'ma* lifestyle, *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing the Holy One's Torah *just like everyone else* is called to do. The king of Israel is not to be considered – or consider himself - above the Torah in any regard. He is to *teach the Torah by example.*

Shevet Levi – The Levi'im [Levites]

After concluding his discussion of the coming Messiah-king (who else do you think Moshe was describing as *Melech Yisrael?*), Moshe turns his focus and attention to another leadership group - *i.e. the tribe of Levi* [and particularly the *kohanim* (priests)].

This group was not to be a group of wealth and privilege. They were not to have land holdings like other Hebrews, or indeed any permanent possessions. They were to “*minister in the name of the Holy One Eloheicha [the Holy One Your God]*” before His altar – His ONLY altar, that is, at *the place where the Holy One would choose to place His Name*.

To us who have never known either a temple or an altar of *korbanot*⁴ the *kohanim* and *Levi'im* [Levites] seem quite foreign and their function archaic. Let us not forget however that for centuries these people - imperfect as they proved to be (like the judges, kings, and prophets, yes?) - not only presided over the service of the Holy One's *korbanot* but also *preserved the Torah for us and for our children's children*.

Malachi 2:7 states the leadership role of the *kohen* as: ***the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the Torah from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Holy One of hosts***. The focus of Moshe's discussion of the *Levi'im* and the subclass of *kohanim*, however, is on how they - who have no property or possessions of their own – are to be highly cherished, listened to, and faithfully cared for by the people. Moshe says:

***You are to give him the first fruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil,
and the first of the fleece of your sheep,
For the Holy One your God has chosen him out of all your tribes
to stand to minister in the name of the Holy One, him and his sons forever.
So if a Levite comes from any of your gates,
from where he dwells among all Israel,
and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the Holy One chooses,
then he may serve in the name of the Holy One his God
as all his brethren the Levites do, who stand there before the Holy One.***
[Deuteronomy 18:4-7]

The clear implication of Torah is that there is an economic as well as a spiritual blessing which falls upon a society which accommodates persons whose entire lives are dedicated to ministering to the Holy One. The idea of supporting *kohanim* and *Levi'im* through a share of the *korbanot* presented at the Tabernacle or Temple is not to perpetuate the power structure of an elite clergy class – the idea is instead for the people to *feed off of the passion and dedication of lovers of God with servant hearts*.

Alas, there is the potential for *kohanim*, as well as the rest of the citizenry, to stray from the mark. Malachi will later declare concerning them:

⁴ ***Korbanot*** are animals and produce which Torah called to be brought to the brazen altar Tabernacle in response to Leviticus 1-5, Numbers 28-29, etc. to serve as surrogates of approach for worshippers of the Holy One.

*But you have departed from the way;
You have caused many to stumble at the Torah.
You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Holy One of hosts.
Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people,
because you have not kept My ways, but have shown partiality in the Torah."*
[Malachi 2:8-9]

To put it another way, as go the priests and *Levi'im*, so goes Israel. If the nation of the Redeemed is in decline, danger or despair, or confusion, the problem probably goes far deeper than politics. The root of the problem is always in the spiritual leadership. Consider the lesson of Jonah 1:1-12 – when a specially-called servant of the Holy One shirks his responsibility, and does his or her own thing instead of the Holy One's Will, he puts everyone in jeopardy.

Getting the Kind of Leadership We Deserve

One can look at different eras of our history as that history is described in the TaNaKh and see that, at different times, different forms/types of leadership have prevailed in the Covenant Community – not even counting the foreign governments who have enslaved and oppressed us when we broke away from the Holy One our God and the Torah. First were the *Shoftim* [Judges and local leaders], whose appearance and season of reigning over us is recorded in the book of Judges. Then came the era of the first *Melechim* [kings] of Israel and Judah, the narrative history of which is set forth in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. After the time of the first kings (which ended with the onset of Babylonian captivity), we entered an era in which *nevi'im* [prophets] led the people. Finally, in the days of Greek and Syrian oppression – highly prophetic of a soon and future day of intense tribulation and abomination – a family of *zealous kohanim* [priests]⁵ after the pattern of Pinechas stepped in and assumed the central role of leadership in the Covenant community.

Whenever *Am Yisrael* has stayed close to the path of Torah, holding *tzedek* [i.e. *what the Holy One would do in a given situation*] up for the world to see, the God of our forefathers has always provided the *type* of leadership His people NEED. It will always be so. Whenever Am Yisrael has strayed from the Torah and gone its own way, however, the Holy One has disciplined us by giving us the quality of leadership we DESERVED. That is the way it is for the nations all the time. Every culture and nation get the kind of 'king' – or the form and quality of government and socio-political leadership – they deserve. And to the extent we are caught up with them, we get it to. For us, however, the purpose of the Holy One allows us to experience these things to teach us what is important in life – and how human forms of government and political, economic, or social theories always fail

⁵ These kohanim are often called the 'Maccabees'.

eventually in regard to those important things. Sometimes the lessons we – and the world – learn from these constructs are tolerable; other times they are very, very unpleasant. The people of the world get filled with outrage and angst. They stress. They panic. We are called to react differently. We are called not to be surprised when a human-conceived form of government or socio-political power collapses. We are called to over-react remember that it is the Holy One, our Covenant Partner, Who establishes 'kings' and 'kingdoms' – and Who brings them down – all in the proper time. And we are to walk in sure confidence that our Bridegroom King's Plan is always to work all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Attitude reflects leadership, it is true. But leadership also reflects attitude. Leadership and the attitudes of the people governed are mirror images of each other.

Beware Over-Emphasis on Leadership Issues

The answer to our exile [from possession of the Land the way Moshe taught us to possess it] is not, I do not think, 'better leaders'. The Holy One will *clean house*, and will *take care of deficiencies in our leadership*. If you doubt that, just read Ezekiel chapter 34 and Jeremiah chapter 23. Ezekiel 34 specifically tells us:

*Thus says the Holy One GOD: "Behold, I am against the shepherds;
and I will require my sheep at their hand,
and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep.
Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore;
and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them."*

*For thus says the Holy One GOD: Behold -
I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.*

So, no, the answer to our exile is not to seek out new or better leadership. The answer to our exile is, instead, for us to become more Torah-faithful people. It is for us to return to the ancient paths. It is for us to *sh'ma* the voice of the Holy One. It is for us to *sh'mar* and *asah* the Torah of the Holy One. It is for us to live our lives, and teach our children to live their lives, in *yirat Adonai* [fear of the Holy One], *ahavat Adonai* [love of the Holy One] and *avodat Adonai* [service of the Holy One]. It is for us to become *Bridal* in our orientation. It is for us to make *t'shuvah*, and run into His embrace. He will rescue us, and restore us. Ezekiel 34:10-16 says:

*As a shepherd seeks out his flock
in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad,
so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places
where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.
I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries,
and will bring them into their own land;
and I will feed them on the mountains of Yisra'el, by the watercourses,*

and in all the inhabited places of the country.

*I will feed them with good pasture;
and on the mountains of the height of Yisra'el shall their fold be:
there shall they lie down in a good fold;
and on fat pasture shall they feed on the mountains of Yisra'el.*

*I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,
and I will cause them to lie down, says the Holy One GOD.*

*I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away,
and will bind up that which was broken,
and will strengthen that which was sick:
but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in tzedek [justice].*

It is a *promise*, Dear Reader - a promise of Your Betrothed Bridegroom! So do not focus your attention on 'leadership'. Do not expect too much of leaders. Do not seek their *approval* or their *anointing*. Put your trust in the Holy One – our Covenant Partner. And *be who you were created to be*. Be all that Torah says you are. And do it *whether your leaders prove to be faithful are not*. Focus your attention on *Torah* – not on pleasing men. *For as Kohelet* tells us:

*“Wisdom [and what is wisdom, but Torah?]
makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.”
[Ecclesiastes 7:19]*

The TaNaKh makes it clear that whenever one group or type of leaders of the Holy One's people ceases to follow the principle spoken by Yeshua (which, of course, was a *drash* on the subjects of this week's aliyah), that form of leadership will be judged and replaced. The *shofet* was replaced by *melechim*. The *melechim* violated the four proscriptions, one by one, and forsook the two primary *mitzvot* of kings, and the Holy One wrested leadership away from them, and gave it to *nevi'im* like Ezekiel, Daniel, and Nehemiah. The *nevi'im* following these leaders began to prophesy falsely, saying what people wanted to hear rather than what the Holy One was saying, so He raised up the tribe of Levi to cleanse the Temple and rule - until they, too, became corrupt. You see Dear Reader, the Holy One is our *shofet*, our *shoter*, our *melech*, our *kohen*, and our *navi*. He is jealous for His people. And He is zealous for His Torah. Cling to Torah, and *true leadership* – the Holy One's best - will be provided.

Human Leadership in Am Yisrael Is, After All, Primarily to Serve, Not to Rule

The main point of these discussions of “leaders” Moshe prophesies that the Holy One will provide for us seems to be, as Yeshua taught on this very subject:

*You know that the rulers of the goyim [Gentile nations]
lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.
It is not to be so with you.*

***Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
and whoever wants to be first must be your slave –
just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve***

[Matthew 20:25-28]

The people of the Holy One of Israel are not to be like any other people. Leaders of the Holy One's people are not to be like any other people's leaders. Our leaders are to have no rod of authority, but *a basin of water* [a metaphor for Torah] with which they lovingly wash the dust from the feet of the people they are privileged to lead. **John 13:12-17.**

Our leaders are to *pour out what the Holy One gives them, for those who do not know how to wash themselves*. That, and that alone, is the essence of true spiritual 'authority'. So if you are looking for a *leader*, do not look for someone wearing priestly garments and bearing a majestic scepter of power and authority. Do not even look for speaking mysteries and working miracles. What you should be looking for is someone with a basin of water, offering to give you a cool, refreshing drink. You should be looking for someone who *asks for nothing for himself, but everything for the Holy One*. You should be looking for someone who claims absolutely no title or "right" to rule whatever, but who *offers to give away for free to anyone who asks that which the Holy One has given to him*. But, better yet, do not look for a leader. Do not chase after or hang around leaders trying to 'catch their anointing'. You will just be disappointed. All flesh is, after all, like grass, and their glory like the flowers of the field. The grass will soon wither and the flower will soon fall.

So, as Torah says, ***Tzedek! Tzedek – pursue it!*** Life should be a PURSUIT, it is true – but what we pursue should never be men or ministries or money or any of the other houses of straw after which foolish humans seek. Our pursuit is instead to be for the Presence and Counsel of the Divine Bridegroom alone.

Commit – or recommit – your life and all your resources to that pursuit, Dear Reader. Pursue *Him* with all your passion and all your spiritual energy. Let *Him* teach you *His ways* and show you His glory. And if you do that, you will find, soon enough, that He will give you a basin of water, and place you in the midst of a lot of people with dirtier feet than yours. You wash; He'll dry.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Moshe prophesied that Israel would decide she wanted a "king" after settling in the Land of Promise. What did he prophesy would be the reason Israel would give for wanting a king?
2. What criteria or qualifications did Moshe tell Israel that her King would have

to meet?

3. What did Moshe tell the Israelites that their King should do to learn to fear the Holy One?

4. Moshe said that the priests and Levites were to “minister” before the Holy One. Look up the word “minister” in your dictionary and in Strong’s (Heb. Word #8334—*sh’rat*) and write a definition that you think tells what priests and Levites were to do.

5. In today’s haftarah ha-navi *Yeshayahu* [the prophet Isaiah] calls us out of our state of shock from all that has happened to us and around us. He describes a crisis of leadership.

***Hit'oreri hit'oreri** [Awake, awake]! **Kumi** [stand up], Y'rushalayim,
that have drunk at the hand of the Holy One the **kos** [cup] of his wrath;
you have drunken the bowl of the **kos** [cup] of staggering, and drained it.*

*There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth;
neither is there any who takes her by the hand
among all the sons who she has brought up.*

These two things have happened to you. Who will bemoan you?

***Ha-Shod v'ha-shever** [Desolation and destruction],
v'ha-ra'av [the famine] and **ha-cherav** [the sword];
how shall I comfort you? Your sons have fainted;
they lie at the head of all the streets, as an antelope in a net;
they are full of **chamat-Adonai** [the wrath of the Holy One],
ga'arat Elohayich [the rebuke of your God]
[Isaiah 51:17-20]*

[A] From what “cup” or “goblet” has Jerusalem said to have drunk? [Remember, this is *symbolic language*, like Yeshua used to describe His upcoming crucifixion when He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, **Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...**”

[B] All Israel’s kings and priests and prophets and other leaders were unable to “comfort” Jerusalem. Who did the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven say would be her comforter?

6. According to today’s reading from the B’rit Chadasha some high-ranking *Kohanim* and *Levi'im* have been sent out from Y'rushalayim to the Yarden [Jordan] River to investigate the highly controversial actions of Yochanan the Immerser [who was one of their own tribesmen, according to Luke 1:5]. The corrupt leaders in power in Jerusalem at that time [in cooperation with Rome, from which they had purchased the right to rule] considered Yochanan’s ministry to be *divisive* [it called people away from the compromised Temple and its corrupt

priesthood] and *dangerous*. So, they appointed a delegation to go and confront and interrogate him, to see just what – and Who - they were ‘up against’.

They asked him, "What then? Are you Eliyahu?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you Ha-Navi [the Prophet]?"

He answered, "No."

[John 1:21]

[A] What two people besides Messiah did the priests and Levites think John might claim to be?

[B] Why would they think of those two?

*May the Holy One always be your ruler,
and His Torah your constitution.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 94:12-16

*Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Holy One,
and teach out of your Torah;
That you may give him rest from the days of adversity,
until the pit is dug for the wicked.*

*For the Holy One won't reject his people;
neither will he forsake his inheritance.
For judgment will return to righteousness;
All the upright in heart will follow it.*

*Who will rise up for me against the wicked?
Who will stand up for me against the evildoers?*