

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Ki Tetze:*** **Deuteronomy 23:1-20²**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 54:4-5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 5:3**

The Holy One your God walks in the midst of your camp
[Deuteronomy 23:14(a)]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 27:4;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 3rd Petition, *S'lach* [The Prayer for Forgiveness]

Lo-yikach ish et-eishet aviv – A man is not to take unto himself his father's wife ... *v'lo yegaleh k'naf aviv* – and he is not to uncover his father's 'skirt'. **Deuteronomy 23:1.**

Moshe is teaching us methodologies designed to assist us in establishing a Heaven-Scented Society on earth. He wants us to know that we must be light years more honorable and in control of our fleshly urges, appetites, drives and desires (and the hormone tides that rise and fall with the situations we face and the seasons of life) – than any of the raging nations of fallen humanity. Neither romance, lust, voyeurism, curiosity, loneliness, rejection reaction, aggressive tendencies, competition, conquest-opportunity, malice, or any other form of dark energy is to be allowed to distract us from our magnificent *tikkun adam/tikkun olam* mission. The bar is high – and the time has come for our bar exam.

Sitting for the Bar

Following the parabolic method the Holy One employed in discipling him in the early days at Sinai [see Exodus 22-23], the prophet is intentionally throwing a daunting barrage of emotionally charged hypotheticals at us. Each difficult situational challenge he places in front of us is designed to test our levels of *Yirat Adonai* ('fear' of the Holy One), *Ahavat Adonai* ('love' of the Holy One), *Ahavat Rei'eicha* (love of our neighbor). He intends for each hypothetical he propounds to do three things: [1] *push one or more of our narcissistic urge, appetite, drive, desire, or revulsion buttons*; [2] *activate one or more of our negative emotion³ 'triggers'*; and [3] *challenge our personal, cultural, ideological, philosophical*

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² The citation given is per the numbering in the Hebrew Bible. In English Bibles this aliyah begins at Deuteronomy 22:30.

³ Negative emotions of the flesh are powerful, distracting, spiritual energy misdirecting feelings that disconnect us from the Holy One's True Tone and set off shockwaves of toxicity, often invoking a stress response and/or a fight-or-flight reflex. They include *worry, nervousness, anxiety, fear, intimidation, irritation, frustration, offense, umbrage, anger, embarrassment, humiliation, shame, guilt, resentment, jealousy, envy, greed, sorrow, melancholy, gloom, despondency, sentimentality, nostalgia, disgust, revulsion, and loathing.*

predisposition – i.e. shake the foundations of our fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge-poisoned pseudo-intellects. The goal of this exercise is to train us to deal with the challenges of mortal life by *seeking counsel from the Holy One* instead of relying upon our own worldly wits, and letting the Holy One *activate and conforming to the living devarim that now dwell within us* instead of defaulting to our fleshly, emotionally reactive, and pseudo-intellectual pretensions of base, fallen humanistic ‘logic’ and ‘reason’. The hypothetical situations Moshe is laying out are, by design, fraught with a combination of ‘*serpentine suggestions*’ on the one hand and ‘*redemptive potential*’ on the other. Yeshua will follow the same pattern with the masses. He will call this didactic method *m’ mashel mashalim – i.e. ‘speaking in parables’*. See **Matthew 13:34-35; Mark 4:2 ff; and Luke 8:10 ff.** Parables – in Hebrew, *meshalim* – constitute the Kingdom’s most effective training protocol. Parables call for the student to *access and draw cross-generational wisdom, transcendent shalom, and kedusha energization* from the internalized *devarim [i.e. the dibrot, mitzvot, mishpatim, chukim, edut, pekudim, derachim, and mishmerot of Torah]* that he has previously learned, and then humbly surrender to the gentle, redemption-focused promptings of the *Ruach Ha-Qodesh* – rather than acting, as other men do: out of narcissistic self-interest, undisciplined passion and cultural, ideological, philosophical, and/or theological predisposition. Each parable Moshe lays before us is carefully crafted to do three things in us: [1] to call to remembrance a powerful identity-shaping episode from the patriarchal narratives, [2] to invite us to envision making a present-tense application of one of the foundational identity-shaping empowerments of the *Aseret Ha-Dibrot [i.e. the Great Sinaitic revelation flow that has come to be referred to profanely among the nations as the ‘Ten ‘Commandments’]* and [3] to stir up in our hearts a passionate longing for the earthly reign of Mashiach. Moshe is using these parabolic hypotheticals to train us in the art of discerning the sometimes subtle differences between the path of the Bridegroom and the more popular path of self-will, and to clearly mark off the distinction between bondage to the flesh and pseudo-intellect on one hand, and abundant, fruitful, Kingdom life in the Spirit on the other.

Moshe wants us to not only see the pathway of life, health and peace clearly, but also to recognize and learn to avoid all the dangerous off-ramps that lead off toward very different destinations. He wants us recognize, understand, resist, and ultimately overcome the *serpentine suggestion squawk-box* – some call it *yetzer hara*, or ‘evil inclination’ - that challenges us all at every step along the way. Moshe is therefore showing us the battlegrounds, the flesh pits, the spin zones, and the back alleys at and through which we are most likely to encounter – and get *shanghai-ed* by -‘*old yetzer*’. He is teaching us how to deal with the ‘*ra*’ (self-will, self-determination, self-expression, and self-promotion) that still

inheres in our animal souls and pseudo-intellecets - individually and collectively. Even as Moshe once famously cried out to the Holy One ‘*teach me Your Ways!*’, lately he has been crying out to us: *Let me teach you His Ways!*’ The plains of Moav are resounding, and the surrounding hills are echoing, with Paradigm-Shifting Prophetic Words that originated in the Benevolent Heart and Brilliant Mind of the Creator of the Universe. The Pathways of the Holy One are being mapped out for us – and placed in stark contrast with the folly-saturated ways of fallen man. It will, of course, take years – if not millennia – for us and our descendants to sort out all the implications and ramifications of all the things Moshe is saying.

So if you have found yourself max-ing out, do not feel alone. It should help, however, to *keep squarely in your mind the essential themes of the present discourse*. It is all about two essential themes. The first of these essential themes is ‘*YOU MUST NOT HIDE YOURSELF*’. The second is ‘*PURGE THE EVIL FROM YOUR MIDST*’. These are the two over-riding mandates that are to govern all our interactions with other human beings – whether in our houses, our extended families, our neighborhoods, our marketplaces, or in the world. These mandates are absolutely ‘*Mission: Critical!*’

Our Two Over-Riding Social Interaction Mandates:

We Will Not Hide Our Covenant Identities from the World; and We Will Continually Be About the Business of Seeking Out and Purging the Ra [i.e. self-will, self-interest, self-promotion, and self-expression] From Our Own Lives, Households, and Covenant Culture

In the early stages of his *magnum opus* Moshe gave us two over-riding *mitzvot of the heart*. In regard to our vertical relationship with the Holy One the prophet enjoined us first to *reverence the Holy One our God [Deuteronomy 6:2a]*, and secondly to *love the Holy One our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our substance [Deuteronomy 6:5]*. But we have learned that reverencing and loving the Holy One our God, while starting as *mitzvot of the heart*, must also be *mitzvot of practical substantive application*. The natural outgrowth - and essential proof - of both of these two over-riding *mitzvot of the heart* is the same – what both reverencing and loving the Holy One mean in real time is that we are always passionately about the business of three grand enterprises: [1] *sh’ma-ing* [tuning our inner ear to, listening for, hearing, getting in rhythm with, and yielding our wills, energies, and physical members to] our King’s directives, [2] *sh’mar-ing* [cherishing, treasuring, delighting in, prioritizing, meditating on/about, exercising extreme diligent in regard to, and zealously watching over to keep inviolate] our Covenant Partners’ instructions and decrees; and [3] *asah-ing* [i.e. catching the vision for, using as a blueprint for life, applying creative energy to - and investing resources in - the practical demonstration of; building into every phase of our lives and

activities; and causing to become visible to others, beautiful, and functional] the Holy One's commandments. See **Deuteronomy 6:2b**, **Deuteronomy 6:8-9**; **Deuteronomy 10:12**; **Deuteronomy 11:13-28**; **Deuteronomy 14:23**, and **Deuteronomy 17:29, 31:12**.

In the area of social interaction – the realm Moshe is addressing in Ki Teitze- it is much the same. We have been given an *over-riding mitzvah of the heart* in Leviticus 19 – i.e. we are to *love our neighbor as we ourselves have been loved*. But that love – like the love of the Holy One – must have practical manifestations. The over-riding practical manifestations of loving our neighbor, Moshe wants us to know, are [1] not hiding ourselves and our Covenant identities and callings; and [2] being diligent to remove/purge every trace of *ra* [i.e. self-will, self-interest, self-expression, and self-promotion] from our hearts, homes, marketplaces, and civic dealings.

What does the '*YOU MUST NOT HIDE YOURSELF*' injunction mean for us in real time? It means that we are not to view our spiritual life as an 'escape' from the physical world and the people in it. It means we are created for the *cutting edge* and for *the point of the sphere* - not for *comfort zones*, for the *seat of the scornful*, or for the *ivory tower of the cynic*. It means we were redeemed to exercise high levels of positive influence and impact upon the world, not to isolate ourselves behind fortresses of self-righteous theology and moral outrage. It means that our Covenant lifestyle is supposed to be active in real time for all to see and watch. It means that our atmosphere-shifting level of relationship with the Creator of the Universe is to be on-display, front-and-center, at all times. It means that we are called to be a city set on a hill – a city shining like the sun, that cannot be hidden.

What does Moshe's '*PURGE THE EVIL FROM YOUR MIDST*' injunction mean? It means that we are to be *wise as serpents* and *harmless as doves*. It means we are to be constantly on the lookout for dark-energy encroachments in *seed form*. It means we are not to sit by quietly and passively and let encroachments against our Covenant relationship and the '*on point of the sphere*' lifestyle we are called to lead make inroads into our personal lives, take root in our households, or establish a beachhead in our neighborhoods. It means when we find any hint of uncleanness, of dark energy encroachment, of bitter root, or any stronghold – arising in us in *seed form*, we are to spring into action immediately. We are to zealously *root the uncleanness, the dark energy encroachment, the bitter root, or the stronghold out* – out of our minds, out of our hearts, out of our conversations, out of behavior, out of our households, and out of our communities - *before they grow to maturity and start wreaking destruction*. More on the two essential themes of the *Ki Teitze* download later. Right now Moshe is releasing another *mitzvah fountain!*

The Mystery of K'hal Adonai

The first 8 verses of today's Torah reading deal with something our English Bibles translate as either 'the assembly'. The Hebrew phrase used is *k'hal Adonai*. We will talk at some length what *k'hal Adonai* is - and most definitely is not - later in this study. All the opening verses of this download tell us is that (a) there are two classes of people from within the Redeemed Community who are excluded by Torah from *k'hal Adonai* – namely *eunuchs*⁴ and *mamzers*⁵; (b) that the males of two neighboring nations – Ammon and Moav - are permanently excluded from the *k'hal*; and (c) that the males of Edom and Egypt are also under significant restriction. Moshe declares the will of the Holy One regarding *k'hal Adonai* this way:

Lo-yavo Amoni uMoavi b'K'hal Adonai

An Ammonite or Moabite [man] may not enter the k'hal Adonai

gam dor asiri lo-yavo lahem b'K'hal Adonai ad-olam

They are never to enter k'hal Adonai, even after the tenth generation.

Al-devar asher lo-kidmu etchem b'lechem uvamayim

This is because they did not greet you with bread and water

B'derech b'tzetchem miMitzrayim

when you were on the way out of Egypt,

v'asher sachar aleicha et-Bil'am ben-Be'or miPtor

and also because they hired Bila'am son of Beor from Pethor

Aram Naharayim l'kaleleika

in Aram Naharaim to curse you.

Lo-tidrosch sh'lomam v'tovatam

Never seek peace, nor [expect] anything good [with these nations],

kol-yameicha l'olam

as long as you exist.

[Deuteronomy 23:4-7⁶]

Note that the prohibition of entry into *k'hal Adonai*, and the instruction to never 'make peace', is *specific to the descendants of Ammon and Moav*. In the next breath Moshe instructs us:

Lo-teta'ev Edomi ki achicha hu

Do not despise the Edomite, since he is your brother.

⁴ Deuteronomy 23:2 reads: *Lo-yavo fetzua-dakah uchrut shofchah b'K'hal Adonai [One with damaged – i.e., cloven, crushed, or severed - male genitalia is not to enter into the k'hal of the Holy One].*

⁵ I.e. persons born to a union prohibited by Torah. Deuteronomy 23:3 reads: *Lo-yavo mamzer b'k'hal Adonai gam dor asiri lo-yavo lo b'K'hal Adonai [A mamzer is not to enter the k'hal of the Holy One; even after the tenth generation, he is not to enter the k'hal of the Holy One.]*

⁶ In Western Bibles, these verses are numbered as Deuteronomy 23:3-6.

lo-teta'ev Mitzri ki-ger hayita v'ar'tzo

Do not despise the Egyptian, since you were an immigrant in his land.

Banim asher-yivaldu lahem

[Therefore] children born to [members of these nations]

dor sh'lishi yavo lahem b'K'hal Adonai

in the third generation may enter k'hal Adonai

[Deuteronomy 23:8-10⁷]

Is Moshe suddenly spouting *racial prejudice*? Are we to regard Ammonites and Moabites, or persons with injured private parts, or persons who by no fault of their own are born out of a Torah-contemplated wedlock as somehow ‘inferior’ to the rest of us? Is Moshe sanctioning discrimination against some people just because they happen to be of a certain race [*i.e.* Ammoni or Moavi, in particular], or born of certain parents [*i.e.* those whose marriage is not sanctioned by Torah], or unable to sire children [*i.e.* those with damaged male reproductive organs]. Is Moshe suddenly in his old age becoming a preacher of INTOLERANCE?

The answer to all these questions is, of course, ‘no’. Moshe is merely revealing which ethnic groups present us with [a] the biggest danger to our community and its redemptive/restorative mission, and [b] the greatest challenge to – and most powerful triggers of – our individual and collective *yetzer hara*. What kind of security measures we decide to develop vis-a-vis these ‘triggering’ ethnicities will depend upon what this mysterious *K'hal Adonai* that certain groups of people are not to be permitted to enter turns out to be.

So ... Exactly What – and Who - Is K'hal Adonai?

Most people look at the world through tainted 21st Century glasses. They can't really help it, because that is just the time in which we live. Through 21st Century glasses, the term ‘the assembly’ appears to refer to an organized, membership-based group of adherents of a religion who meet regularly for religious services – like the neighborhood synagogues, local churches, and mosques that dot our landscapes. But none of those things existed when Moshe gave the instructions we read today. None of them – and nothing remotely similar to them – is what the Torah is talking about.

The term *K'hal Adonai* was first used in Torah in Numbers 16:3, in connection with the narrative of the rebellion of Korach. Korach and his co-conspirators accused Moshe and Aharon of exalting themselves above *K'hal Adonai*. This reference does not connote a *religious gathering*, but a *political institution*. The phrase was again employed by disgruntled members of the Redeemed Community in Numbers 20:4, when the representatives of *B'nei Yisrael* came to

⁷ In Western Bibles, these verses are numbered as Deuteronomy 23:7-9.

Moshe in the Wilderness of *Tzin* complaining of the lack of water, and saying: “*Why have you brought up K’hal Adonai into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?*”

The phrase *K’hal Adonai* will be employed again by the writer of the Chronicles of Israel’s kings. In I Chronicles 28:8 King David, in the course of designating Sh’lomo [Solomon] as his successor, will issue this decree: “*Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, K’hal Adonai, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Holy One your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave [it] as an inheritance for your children after you forever.*” Note that the phrases *all Israel* and *K’hal Adonai* are mentioned side-by-side as if they were two different entities. This is not a poetic text; it is instead a formal decree of government and succession issued by an actively reigning King to his subjects. It is therefore difficult to construe *K’hal Adonai* as merely a poetic repetition of ‘all Israel’. David certainly seems to be referring to two separate groups of people – one group called ‘all Israel (*kol Yisrael*)’, and another group called ‘*K’hal Adonai*’.

Different Hebraic Lines of Thought About Who K’hal Adonai Might Include

One tradition describes *K’hal Adonai* as the body or council made up of the elders of the tribes⁸. See Numbers 7:2-3, 10:4,16:2, 25:4, 31:13, and 32:2, among other verses, to see in what contexts such a group of tribal elders was active in the days of Moshe. If a ruling council of elders is what Moshe is talking about in Deuteronomy 23 the restrictions make perfect sense. A wise nation does not want its problems, policies and priorities discussed with foreigners – particularly foreigners from nations with which have historically been mortal enemies. And tribal leaders who cannot produce sons to step into their shoes when they die [e.g. eunuchs], or who do not have family histories demonstrating strong adherence to the Torah [e.g. *mamzers*] also do not appear to represent the best choices available for continuity of Torah-based leadership.

But some scholars and theologians are unwilling to accept the logical premise that in Deuteronomy 23 Moshe is using the term *K’hal Adonai* to refer to merely the council of tribal elders of Israel – *i.e.* a primarily political and governmental, policy making and law promulgating body. These insist on giving the term *K’hal Adonai* a much broader scope of application. Some associate the term *K’hal Adonai* with those who are allowed by the ruling priests to physically enter the

⁸ By the days of the Second Temple this tribal council had been renamed ‘the Sanhedrin’, and consisted of 71 respected sages who met in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in Herod’s Temple. The Sanhedrin was led by a president called the *nasi* [prince] and a vice president called the *av beitt din* [father of the court]. The remaining 69 sages sat in a semicircle facing the *nasi* and *av beit din*.

area of the brazen altar to present *korbanot* [i.e. surrogates of intimate personal approach to YHVH, tithes of produce and animals, firstfruits of the field, vineyard, and orchard, and firstborns of the flock and herd, etc.]. Those who hold to this interpretation of the phrase *K'hal Adonai* would prohibit Ammoni, Moavi, eunuchs, and mamzers from participating in the *korbanot* presentations. This interpretation however seems to fly squarely in the face of Isaiah 56:3-8.

Others choose to associate the term *k'hal Yisrael* with an economic class – the ‘landed gentry’, so to speak, who are afforded the privilege of possessing land in Eretz Yisrael. Those holding to this interpretation would prohibit Ammoni, Moavi, eunuchs, and *mamzers* from claiming any incident of land ownership.

Still others choose to associate the term *k'hal Yisrael* with a cultural privilege – i.e. the right to be considered natural/biological descendants of Avraham. They would prohibit anyone in the listed groups from ever calling themselves, or being culturally accepted as, biologically ‘Jewish’.

Are you confused? Well, there are several theories for sure. But one thing that is absolutely certain is that the term *K'hal Adonai* does NOT refer to, and should never be applied to, modern day synagogues, churches, and/or small-group fellowships. Let me explain why.

The Noun in Question – K'hal

The verb root of the word our English Bibles translate as “assembly” or “congregation” in these verses is *k'hal*⁹. This word is first used in Genesis 28. As our ancestor *Ya'akov* [Jacob] is being sent away to Paddan-Aram to escape the wrath of *Esav*, *Yitzchak* [Isaac] blesses him with these words:

*May El Shaddai bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you,
that you may be a company [Hebrew, k'hal] of peoples,
and give you the blessing of Avraham, to you, and to your seed with you,
that you may inherit the land where you travel, which God gave to Avraham."*

[Genesis 28:3-4]

The focus of the Hebrew word *k'hal* is not on ‘meeting’, or ‘congregating’ in the English sense. It does not refer to those who choose to associate with each other, or join an organization. The emphasis is on the concept of *response to a call*. And since we are talking about *K'hal Adonai*, the source of the call is the Holy One, and the Holy One alone – not any man or group of men. So if, as many insist, the term *K'hal Adonai* has any legitimate application outside the idea of a council of tribal elders, it is going to be limited to a group of people not appointed by men but specifically called and commissioned by the Holy One. No

⁹ *K'hal* is kuf, hey, lamed. Strong's Hebrew word #6951, it is pronounced *kaw-hawl*'.

voluntary membership association like a local church or synagogue or civic organization or lodge is a *k'hal* in the Hebraic sense. Wild horses meet together in the field every day. Dogs form packs in the wild all the time. They are not a *k'hal of the Holy One* just because they meet together or congregate in one place. The issue is not whether a group of people choose to *meet together* – it is whether they are *sh'ma*-ing the Call of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov. A *k'hal*¹⁰ is a group *called together – summoned by the Holy One* to meet with Him for a specific purpose. After assembling such a group spend their time listening for the counsel and directives of the Holy One - not expressing each other's opinions or beliefs.

I hope you can now see the relationship between a *k'hal* and the *sh'ma* concept on which all of Torah is based. The Holy One calls people to Him. All who *sh'ma* become a *k'hal* [or, feminine, *k'hillah*]. The *sh'ma*-ing ones of the Holy One are the only ones who can or will move/transition [*bo*] with the *K'hal Adonai*. *K'hal Adonai* doesn't call itself together – it only responds to the Divine Bridegroom's call to meet *with Him*. See e.g. Exodus 19:16 and 24:1; see also Numbers 10:4. Do you see the distinction? In the context of a Hebrew *k'hal*, *the meeting that takes place is not between people* – it is instead *between each called person and our Covenant Partner in Heaven*. The presence of other people is *incidental, not definitional*.

The Verb In Question - Bo

And now let us look a little deeper into the meaning of the Hebrew phrase '*lo-yavo b'K'hal Adonai*' – which is usually translated as '*he shall not enter into the assembly of the Holy One*'. We learn that certain groups of people – certain kinds of eunuchs¹¹, *mamzers*¹², Ammoni and Moavi males [hence not including Ruth, a

¹⁰ The language, like most of Torah, is somewhat ambiguous – and intentionally so. Obviously, the way the noun that is used – *i.e. k'hal* - is written in the text, it involves at least some males; if it was talking about females exclusively, it would have to be written as *k'hillah* [with the feminine-only suffix]. But, as has been discussed previously in these studies, when you have multiple people in a group, some of which are male and some of which are female, the Hebrew language calls for the employment of the male form [e.g. in this case, *k'hal*]. The reason this term is assumed by the sages to apply only to males is largely historical. First, if you define *k'hal* as 'those eligible for call up to military duty', as some are wont to do, until the modern era that only involved men. Or, if you define *k'hal* as the Sanhedrin, or ruling elders, as some are wont to do, that also historically only involved men. Thirdly, if you apply a broader definition, namely those who are counted in a census as part of the nation of B'nei Yisrael for covenant purposes, as some are wont to do, that also only involved males (as each lifting of the heads/census passage in Torah makes very clear). In the minds of elder brother, these three witnesses corroborate one another, and establish the matter. Moreover, any other interpretation would make the marriage of Boaz and Ruth unclean and unacceptable, and David, Sh'lomo, and the Messiah would all be *mamzers* under the Torah.

¹¹ The sages teach that this only applied to persons who *voluntarily* emasculated themselves/engaged in self-mutilation, as part of a pagan worship cult, or in service to a pagan god or king. Hence, the eunuchs mentioned in Isaiah 56:4-5 – who were not party to this forbidden practice, but were castrated by pagan rulers involuntarily – were a legitimate part of *K'hal Adonai*.

female of Moav], and Edomi and Egyptian males [for 3 generations, at least] are not to *enter into k'hal of the Holy One*. Is this interpretation of the verb yavo correct? And if so, what does the four-level prohibition of 'entry' mean?

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'enter' in this phrase is 'yavo' from the verb root *bo*¹³. *Bo* merely means to *make a transition* or journey – i.e. to go from one place [or state/status] to another. *Bo* is most frequently translated in English Bibles as *come* [1435 times] but at other times is translated as *go* [123 times]. Still other times *bo* is translated as *bring* and/or *carry* [602 times] – and on a relatively few occasions, in comparison, it has indeed been translated as *enter* [125 times].

The first usage of the Hebrew verb *bo* in Torah is found in Genesis 2:19, where we are told that the Creator brought [Hebrew *yavo*] all the moving creatures of earth to Adam to see what he would call them. The idea behind the verb is therefore purposeful movement or transition.

Some sages have interpreted the verb of the phrase in question to prevent *intermarrying with* women who are part of the *k'hal of the Holy One*, and which are called to *receive*, to *carry to term*, to *give birth to*, to *nurture*, and to *train* the seed of Avraham. This is based, in part, upon the context. The subject matter of the verse preceding the '*k'hal Adonai*' instructions has to do with sexual intimacy and/or marriage. Since there are no chapter divisions in the original text, what we know as Deuteronomy 23:1 follows the injunction of Deuteronomy 22:30 [*i.e. a man is not to take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's cloak/covering*]. without any intervening punctuation. Under this interpretation the main issue the sages feel is being addressed is *sexuality and marriage*. You can better understand this interpretation if you recall the first usage of the word *k'hal*. It was, as pointed out earlier, in Genesis 28:3 – when Ya'akov was being sent to Paddan-Aram to do what? To TAKE A BRIDE. The bride Ya'akov would choose was to provide the womb that became pregnant with, and the breasts that would nurture, the promised seed. The verses immediately preceding and leading up to Genesis 28:3 make this clear. They read as follows:

*Yitzchak called Ya'akov, blessed him, and commanded him,
"You must not take a wife of the daughters of Kana'an.
Arise, go to Paddan-Aram, to the house of Betu'el your mother's father.
Take a wife from there from the daughters of Lavan, your mother's brother."
[Genesis 28:1-2]*

¹² According to the sages this does *not* mean people born 'out of wedlock' as sons or daughters of people who could have been married under Torah but were not. It means, instead, people born of sexual unions *between close relatives* as prohibited by Leviticus 28 and 30.

¹³ *Bo* is *beit, alef*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #935.

Moshe's message, the sages declare, is that the family-centered worship lifestyle of the *sh'ma* people [the *k'hal of the Holy One*] is so important that the Holy One's people cannot procreate with, or marry, just anybody. The women of the *k'hal of the Holy One* must limit their sexual interaction to, and marry only, people dedicated to the Covenant, who are committed to become Avraham-like fathers – i.e. men who not only provide companionship, support, and pleasure for the woman in question, and/or biologically sire human offspring, but who are fully called, trained, and committed to *instruct/train his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice*. **Genesis 18:19.**

Moshe is declaring, say the sages that adhere to this view, that a woman of the *k'hal of the Holy One* should only consider courtship by, much less betrothal or marriage to, a man who will take to heart Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and perpetuate the Torah lifestyle; therefore, a daughter of the Covenant should never become romantically involved with, have intimacy with, or marry either a pagan or an adherent of any religion, philosophy, or ideology, culture, or society, or self-identification that prioritizes anything above passionately seeking the Holy One's will and following the instructions of Torah in regard to all the affairs of daily and community life.

The National Security Issue

Let us, however, go even deeper into the “*law of context*” – i.e. the rule of interpretation of any writing that requires that the meaning of a text be determined in relation to its *context*. *This requires one to examine not just the preceding verse* [Deuteronomy 22:30, in this case], but the broader subject matter of the discourse in which the specific text is found. Applying this “*law of context*” to the *mitzvot* regarding admission/entry into *K'hal Adonai* one would note that most of the material surrounding these *mitzvot* deals with the people of the Holy One *at war*, engaging *mortal enemies in military operations*. Considering times of war as the greater context, some sages see the issue being addressed by the ‘no entry’ verb phrase Moshe uses in chapter 23 of Deuteronomy as referencing who could and could not be accepted into the military forces and strategic counsels of the Covenant people. Per this interpretation all eunuchs and *mamzer*'s would be exempt from – and ineligible for - combat responsibilities. In addition, under this interpretation all persons with conflicting loyalties like Ammoni and Moav – which had historically shown animosity to Israel – would be suspected as potential enemy spies, and ‘double agents’, and would therefore be considered ineligible to join the armed forces.

The Sheep and Goat Nation Issue

While we are on the subject let us look specifically at the reasons [there are two]

Torah tells us an Ammoni and a Moavi male cannot be a part of the *k'hal* of the Holy One 'to the tenth generation'. Moshe indicates that this is a consequence of two historic events:

... they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Bila'am, son of Beor ... to pronounce a curse on you.
[Deuteronomy 23:4]

Compare this with what Yeshua had to say in regard to His Kingdom. In Matthew 25 the Master taught that those who did not give a cup of water, or clothing, or hospitality, or comfort in time of sickness or imprisonment to 'the least of these My Brothers' would not participate in the *k'hal of the Holy One*, but would be sentenced to *depart from Me, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*. **Matthew 25:41-46**.

The failure to meet the brethren with "bread and water" is to be the basis of the separation of "sheep" nations and "goat" nations. It is the ultimate separation of those of the *Ammoni mindset and character* from the *k'hal of the Holy One*.

Compare also the teaching of Kefa in II Peter 2:1-22 regarding false prophets and teachers who entice others away from a true Torah *sh'ma* lifestyle as exemplified by Yeshua to follow "*the way of Bila'am, son of Beor*" [II Peter 2:15], who appeal to *lustful desires of sinful human nature* [II Peter 2:18]; for these Kefa teaches there is no place in the *k'hal of the Holy One*. For them Kefa says, *blackest darkness is reserved*. II Peter 2:17. The drawing of the Holy One's people away from the *sh'ma* lifestyle to things that cater to the flesh and pseudo-intellect – *flattery*, feelings of *self-importance*, *music that soothes and excites*, and *teachings which play on the emotions*, and that which *draws attention to external matters*, for instance – is to be the criteria that calls for eternal separation of those of the *Moavi mindset and character* from *K'hal Adonai*.

Did our Covenant Partner in Heaven not forgive the Ammoni and Moavi for these offenses? Of course. But what He did not do is *forget*. He forgave these nations, and even instructed Israel NOT to make war on them - See Deuteronomy 2. But He did not - nor did He want us to - forget their treachery, or give them a chance to repeat it. And what is more, He told us that though these peoples were not our *enemies* in relation to war, we were *not to consider them as friends or allies either*. And of course we were not to, through intermarriage, entrust even one of our children – the littlest seed of the covenant- into their counsel or their custody. The Light of the World is, after all, not to be entrusted to anyone but *mothers and fathers like unto Avraham and Sarah*.

So you see, Moshe is preaching neither ‘INTOLERANCE’ nor ‘RACIAL BIAS’. He is not suggesting that Israel – or anyone, for that matter is SUPERIOR to anyone else in any way. The issue Moshe is raising is not about *superiority*, but about *survival*. And it is not about *racial bias*, but about faithfulness to a covenant commitment made to the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven. And it is not about *intolerance*, but about *the fulfillment of purpose and destiny*. The plan of redemption of mankind and Creation trumps personal sensitivities every time.

Some Thoughts Regarding the Remaining Mitzvot of Chapter 23

On the surface some of the *mitzvot* of today’s aliyah may seem archaic and totally inapplicable to our lives in the year 2013. For instance we are told in today’s aliyah that when we are away from our homes at war we are to:

*... have a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself,
and a spade [yated – a sharp utensil like a pin or nail] among your equipment;
and so it shall be, when you relieve yourself,
you are to dig with the yated and cover over/remove from sensory perception
that which excretes out of you.*

[Deuteronomy 23:13]

And we are told:

*You are not to bring the hire of a prostitute [zonah]¹⁴ or the price of a dog [kalev]¹⁵
into the house of the Holy One your God for any vow:
for both these are an abomination to the Holy One your God.*

[Deuteronomy 23:18]

The temptation will be to “tune out” such *mitzvot*, or “write them off” as a relic of other times or as belonging to a “prior” or superseded covenant. It seems to me however that the way we choose to respond to a list of *mitzvot* like this has a lot to say about whether we are truly *sh’ma* people - or are merely students of religious history. May each of us be shown to be the former.

What I mean can be illustrated by pulling one of the *mitzvot* in today’s aliyah out of the list and inspecting it closely as a sample. I choose, somewhat randomly, the *mitzvah* found in Deuteronomy 23:15-16 (NIV) (which, in most Hebrew Bibles, are verses 16 and 17). The Stone Chumash version reads as follows:

“You will not turn over to his master a slave who is rescued from his master to you. He shall dwell with you in your midst, in whatever place he will choose in one of your cities, which is beneficial to him; you shall not taunt him.”

¹⁴ This appears to be a reference to the illicit encounter between Yehudah and Tamar in Genesis 38:15. As you recall, thinking she was a prostitute, Yehudah offered her a lamb.

¹⁵ This brings to remembrance the first reference in Torah to ‘dogs’ – *i.e.* Exodus 11:7: “*against none of the children of Israel shall a dog [kelev] move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the Holy One does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.*”

It would be easy to read a *mitzvah* like this and quickly conclude it is totally inapplicable to us. Slavery as a tolerated institution was abolished in America in the 1860s as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Union victory of the Civil War. So, we may ask, can we take a pen and strike out these verses from our Bibles? Most people, subconsciously at least, do just that. But let us who desire to *sh'ma* the Voice that gave this *mitzvah* dare to be different. Let's listen for a Voice behind the seemingly archaic words - a familiar Voice whispering to us "*Come, My Beloved!*" Let us consider that the words employed are merely a passageway into a deeper dimension.

Where Are the Messiah and/or the Days of the Messianic Kingdom To Be Found Lurking in Each of These Mitzvot?

Is Messiah "hidden" somewhere behind our seemingly obscure "sample" *mitzvah* of the day? In such passages as Luke 24:27 and John 1:45, we are given a clear apostolic teaching that Messiah is "in" the Torah, as well as in the writings and the prophets. It reminds me of the following passage from the Song of Songs:

*Look! There He stands behind our wall, gazing through the opening,
peering through the latticework.*

[Song of Solomon 2:9]

Most of us who are raising children in this day and age know what a "*Find Waldo*" book is. Such a book is a book of cluttered pictures of landscapes, etc., in the background of which, somewhere, the character Waldo can - *if you look long enough and hard enough* - be found hiding. Of course, the fun of the Waldo books is not the landscape; it is *the search*, and the exhilaration a young child experiences when he or she successfully locates the elusive character.

I am not comparing Torah to a "*Find Waldo*" book. However I am saying that the *mitzvot* we are tempted to "write off" as inapplicable are often much more than surface deep - and are in fact "landscapes" in which, if we examine them carefully, we can find the Messiah - and discover secrets about the Messiah's way, truth, and life. I am suggesting that the determination of a child as he looks for Waldo on the pages of a picture book should pale in comparison to the determination of a lover of God as he seeks out Messiah in Torah, and in each individual *mitzvah*.

The joy of a child who finds Waldo should be as nothing in comparison to the joy we experience when we get *a glimpse* of Messiah, and *the heartbeat* of our Covenant Partner in Heaven, in a *mitzvah* we thought at first glance was merely a historical landscape. So with a little different mindset now let us return to our "sample" *mitzvah* of the day - Deuteronomy 23:15-16 (NIV). Where is Messiah's

way, truth, and life “hidden” in the *mitzvah* of giving refuge to, and not “taunting”, liberated slaves?

Let's Pause And Remember Who We Are

Let us begin our search of this landscape by remembering that *we were all once liberated slaves ourselves*. The natural sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and were liberated by the Mighty Hand and Outstretched Arm of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov. Those engrafted into Avraham's family in Messiah Yeshua were likewise slaves to *various different lusts, to Godless philosophies, and to destructive worldly patterns of thought, speech, and action*, and have similarly been liberated by the awesome power and goodness of God.

Are we - who are merely freed slaves ourselves, at most one generation removed - tempted to deny to others the joy of the freedom we have been given (through no merit of our own) as a precious gift? Do we offer “refuge” and a safe haven where people can learn our Covenant Partner's ways *at their own pace*, or do we *enslave them to our “way”* immediately?

ALSO, we may ask, is there in us the “seed form” of “taunting” those not “on our spiritual wavelength”, or who are not at the same place we are in regard to spiritual matters? Do we have a *superior* attitude toward others on the journey? Does a mirror strategically positioned ever catch us looking down our noses condescendingly at others who do not (yet, at least) think the way we do about spiritual things? Well - who do you think is holding the mirror in such cases? No, it isn't Waldo!

Messiah taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that Torah's *mitzvot* are all much, much deeper than the surface instruction. *You have heard it said*, He began each time, then He always went on to reveal different levels of *but I say unto you*. Yeshua was not thereby indicating that the surface instruction was wrong or obsolete. He was saying that the surface instruction *was* valid, and would remain valid forever, *but* that the surface instruction *was only a starting point in searching out the heart of the Holy One* - a passageway into the infinite truth and goodness of our God. To those who thought “*you are not to kill*” meant only “*do not commit murder*”, He taught that this instruction was merely an open door for the Spirit of the Holy One to examine not just violent actions that everyone condemned (mature *ra*), but also a man's words, and the secret thoughts, and attitudes of a man's heart - to see if the *seed form* of that *ra* was somewhere hiding beneath the surface of the individual.

So it is to be the case with each of the “rapid fire” *mitzvot* of today’s aliyah. The surface of each one is still just as valid and applicable as when given by our Covenant Partner in Heaven at Sinai - after all, His Word *does not pass away*. However these *mitzvot* are also designed to penetrate much, much deeper than the surface instruction. Imagine that whatever *ra* tends to separate you from *intimacy with our Covenant Partner in Heaven*, and/or from *unity with the Messiah*, at whatever level (conscious or subconscious), is “Waldo”. Today’s aliyah is a picture book, with several different landscapes. Now go and see if you can ... *find Waldo!*

Questions for Today’s Study

1. Verses 1-20 of Chapter 23 of the scroll of *D’varim* [Deuteronomy] contain many more miscellaneous *mitzvot* we are to take with us *ki tetze* - “when/as [we] go ...” .

[A] Make a list of each specific *mitzvah* contained in these verses;

[B] Now, organize the *mitzvot* of this chapter by categories - [1] *mitzvot* dealing with one’s relationship to the Holy one, [2] *mitzvot* dealing with one’s relationship to his fellow man [other than immediate family], [3] *mitzvot* dealing with one’s relationship to creation; [4] *mitzvot* dealing with inter-family relationships; and [5] *mitzvot* dealing with expressions of human sexuality.

[C] Summarize what message(s) you think, in light of these *mitzvot* our Covenant Partner in Heaven is sending in regard to each of the five broad categories mentioned in subpart [b].

2. Verses 1-8 of today’s aliyah deal with when someone can and cannot “enter into” the “assembly” [KJV “congregation”] of B’nei Yisrael. We know this does not mean that people meeting the descriptions in question cannot be “saved”. We also know that eunuchs, for instance, were permitted to travel in Israel, to go to Jerusalem to worship, and to study the TaNaKh, and even to make *mikveh* [be baptized] - See Acts 8, with regard to the Ethiopian eunuch - and we know that a first generation Moabitess [Ruth], once converted to the worship of the One True God, was permitted to marry a Hebrew [i.e. *Boaz*], and became the great, great grandmother of *David Melech*, King of Israel.

As we explore these instructions of our Covenant Partner in Heaven regarding what is translated into English as the “assembly”, or ‘the congregation’ and who may and may not “enter” it, realize that the same God who declared that His will is that none should perish, but that all should come to *t’shuvah* [Hebrew word usually translated “repentance”], also issued instructions that certain classes of people have “limited” access to and rights within the “assembly”. We need to consider exactly why, and to what extent, our Divine Bridegroom wanted the classes of people in question to be treated differently.

If we learn these things we will come to recognize people who cross our paths with similar characteristic, and will respond to them according to the directives of Scripture rather than according to our fleshly desires. And, in so doing, we will come to understand our Divine Bridegroom – and our Bridal calling in Him - much better.

[A] What is “*the assembly*” [KJV “congregation”] of which the Holy One speaks in verses 1-3? [In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew word and its verb root, and describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing.]

[B] In Strong’s, notice the various Hebrew words that are translated as “assembly” or “congregation”. Look up word #s 5712 and 4150 (the most common words so translated) in Gesenius, and distinguish what is meant by those words from what is meant by the word translated “assembly” in 23:1, 2, and 3.

[C] What do you think it means to “*enter into the assembly of Israel*”? [If you have a *Chumash*, or other Torah commentary, you may wish to consult it to see how the sages have interpreted this phrase.]

[D] List the groups that are not to be permitted to “enter into the “assembly””.

[E] What groups can be admitted only after the tenth generation, if at all? Why?

[F] What group can be admitted after the third generation? Why?

[G] Read *Ha-Navi Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] 56:3-5. Is this inconsistent with Deuteronomy 23:1 [23:2 if you are reading in a TaNaKh or Chumash]? Explain why or why not.

3. Verses 9-14 of today’s aliyah deal with issues of purity in the “camp” of the Redeemed Community during times of warfare.

[A] Look up in Strong’s Concordance and in Gesenius the word translated “camp” [KJV, “host”] and write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[B] In verse 14 the thing that Moshe says the Holy One might see and turn away from is a Hebrew word that can mean “flesh”. Why do you think letting our flesh, or the product of our flesh, be seen so affects our closeness to the Holy One?

4. In today’s Haftarah from the scroll of *HaNavi Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] we read tender words of consolation to the remnant of Israel:

*Don't be afraid; for you shall not be ashamed;
neither be confounded; for you shall not be disappointed:
for you shall forget the shame of your youth;
and the reproach of your widowhood shall you remember no more.*

*For your Maker is your husband¹⁶;
The Holy One of Hosts is his name: and the Holy One of Yisra'el is your Redeemer¹⁷;
the God of the whole eretz shall he be called.*

[Isaiah 54:4-5]

[A] What six negative things does the Holy One say are to be done away with/removed?

[B] What six descriptions or names of the Holy One are contained in verse 5?

5. Today's B'rit Chadasha reading is from I Corinthians 5. Concerning the man who was living with his father's wife, and had thereby "uncovered his father's skirt" in contravention of Torah Shaul tells us:

*For I most assuredly, as being absent in body but present in spirit,
have already, as though I were present, judged him who has done this thing.*

[I Corinthians 5:3]

[A] In what way does Shaul say he is "present with" the Corinthians?

[B] What does Shaul say he has already done concerning the one who has violated the Torah's express injunction against "uncovering his father's skirt"? Look up the Greek word for this verb in Strong's. Write the Greek word and its meaning; then look up the Hebrew word usually translated as "judge" in Strong's and in Gesenius, and contrast the meaning of the Greek word with the Hebraic word picture.

[C] Why was Shaul permitted to "judge" the man who had uncovered his father's skirt [In other words, what process did Torah say had to be followed before such a man could be punished?]

*May the Holy One's Presence be all around you for your protection;
and may Messiah strategically position a mirror before you
in which you can see to the depths of your own soul.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 27:4

*One thing I have asked of the Holy One; that I will seek after,
That I may dwell in the house of the Holy One all the days of my life,
to see the Holy One's beauty [Hebrew no'am – pleasantness, delightful aspects],
and to inquire in his temple.*

¹⁶ The word our English Bibles translate as "husband" in this verse is *ba'al* [*beit, ayin, vav, lamed*], Strong's Hebrew word #01166, pronounced *baw-awl'*.

¹⁷ The word our English Bibles translate as "Redeemer" in this verse is *ga'al* [*gimel, alef, vav, lamed*], Strong's Hebrew word #1350, pronounced *gaw-awl'*. Note that this word rhymes with *ba'al*, the word translated *husband* earlier in the verse. We are reading Hebrew poetry.