

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: *Torah Ki Tetze:* Deuteronomy 24:16 - 25:19
Haftarah: Isaiah: 54:9-10
B'rit Chadasha: I Corinthians 5:5-6

Remember that you were a slave in Egypt.

[Deuteronomy 24:18,22]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 27:7-8;

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

Lo-yumtu avot al-banim - Fathers are not to die upon/in front of/on account of their sons ... *uvanim lo-yumtu al-avot* – and sons are not to die upon/in front of/on account of their fathers ... *ish bechet'o yumatu* – a man who breaches covenant is to go through the death spiral by himself. Deuteronomy 24:16.

One of the surest litmus tests of personal or cultural spiritual health is how one, or a society, thinks and speaks about fatherhood, fatherly discipline, and patriarchal influence. So let's play a little game of 'word association'. Here are the words: Father. Fathers. Fatherhood. Fatherly counsel. Fatherly example. Fatherly discipline. Patriarchal influence on society. Do words like these stir up positive emotions in you – or do they engender negative – even uncomfortable – ones. The Holy One places an extremely high value on patriarchy; and Torah absolutely insists that we promote, encourage, and empower the Divinely ordained relationships between fathers and their children and between children and their fathers. The issue is never going to be whether you think your father – or any father-figure other than the Holy One – was perfect. Fathers should not be expected to be perfect any more than mothers – or any other human beings – are. The issue is simply do you or do you not honor the plan of the Holy One for fatherhood and embrace the God-ordained role of fathers and patriarchal males? In other words, have you let the world/the cultures make you either androphobic – *i.e.* afraid of men- or a *misandrist* – a hater/devaluer of all things masculine? Welcome to the next critical crossroads of Covenant life!

Concerning a Father and His Son

How do you feel about your father? Be he living or dead, involved or largely absent, whenever you think about him and/or speak about him do you honor him – or do you demean him? Are you grateful for his role in giving you life – or does the thought of him stir negative emotions in you. Do you thank Heaven that

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you carry his DNA – or do you complain of it? Do you speak words of praise about his character, his talents, his giftings – or do you mock him, blame him for your/your family’s problems, and consider him accursed? While we are at it, how do you feel about other men in your patriarchal lineage? How do you feel about father-figures in general? How much do you value fatherly example; fatherly counsel; fatherly discipline? What degree of positivity or negativity do you feel about the prior generation of males in your society?

Many modern, pseudo-intellectual humanists despise, slander, and mock masculinity. That is because pseudo-intellectuals are tragically self-obsessed and unhappy people. Lacking an understanding of any ‘greater purpose’ in life than walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful, they delight in repeating cliches and shouting slogans. Their approach to the pivotal relationship that determine the quality, longevity, and impact a culture has on society – i.e. the bond between that culture’s fathers and his children – is no exception. Pseudo-intellectuals despise fathers more than they despise anything else in the world. They sneer at manhood in general; they rage against fatherhood in particular. Blinded by runaway ego and obsessed with fleshly urges and appetites, they blame fathers – theirs and everyone else’s - for every social ill. And when you do or say anything to offend their eggshell egos, they arrogantly retort: ‘*The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree*’. ‘*Like father, like son*’, they perversely posit: “*You are just like your father*”, they shout in arrogant, self-righteous anger. This is paganism exposed at its bare, toxic core, and secularism unmasked at its bitter, rotten root. Poisoned by the serpentine suggestion, pagans and secularists are blinded by selfish ideation. They see everything and everyone in the world through a very narrow and completely perverse lens – as something to evaluate in terms of, and/or consume/destroy in furtherance of, their own self-will. They are in cruel bondage to broad categorizations, oversimplistic classifications, sweeping oversimplifications, and dehumanizing labels. They lump people together according to affiliation-science – focusing on externals like skin color, national origin, age, gender, religion, ideology, economic class, culture, political party, diagnosis, etc. Then, they embrace wholeheartedly all the negative thoughts, toxic emotions, perverse lusts, darkened understandings, and vain imaginations the leavening power of those oversimplistic groupings engender in their fallen hearts, minds, and flesh. They don’t really mean to be so selfish; they can’t help it. All they know – all they have ever known – is the bitter taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They live in an echo chamber, where all the voices they hear just rebroadcast the ageless serpentine whisper in slightly different form, vocabulary, and language. They have zero understanding of uniqueness. They do not have eyes to see distinctiveness. They are incapable

of thinking about people in terms of Divine Purpose, latent potential, or one-of-a-kind irreplaceability. They cannot envision people as unique, inimitable individual Masterpieces created by a Brilliant and Benevolent Creator, each of which is instilled by that Creator with distinct sparks of Divinity and ecosystem-nurturing potential the world has never seen before and will never see again. Pagans, caught up in the darkened understanding of serpentine pseudo-intelligence, choose to think of human beings – except perhaps themselves and those they view as their own ‘kind’ - as mere globs of biological tissue which are in the process of evolving from slime. They therefore consider humanity to be just another of animal life – albeit a form significantly lower than the cats, the dogs, the bulls, the goats, the eagles, the bears, the serpents, the donkeys, and the elephants, which they actually honor and revere.

Which brings us back to the subject of how the pagans and secularist view – and spew silly oversimplifications about – fathers and the children they sire/raise. What do the pithy sayings of the pagans about fathers and their children mean? Sometimes, when the father in question is respected, the sons start life basking in a degree of overflow favor. But pagan societies are critical and judgmental by nature, so this seldom happens. Pagans rush to judgment quickly, apply none of ‘due process’ filters to their thoughts or speech, and thus wind up holding very few men – much less fathers - in high esteem. When the father is held in low esteem for whatever reason – and pagan societies have many, many reasons – the pithy sayings of pagan society mean that children enter saddled with a heavy dose of suspicion and scorn.

The Holy One does not want His Covenant People to see any human being that He created through such a twisted lens. He doesn’t want us to carry prejudices or biases – or project favor or disfavor on anyone - based on any person’s family surname or paternity. He wants us to see each human being He introduces into the world as a precious gift to value, respect, nurture, and bless. This takes some getting used to. It is very uncomfortable – and seemingly un-‘natural’ - to the pagan ‘old man’/flesh nature. It is radically counter-cultural – just like the rest of Torah’s *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukim*.

Welcome to the Kingdom-of-Heaven Counterculture!

The *mitzvot* of Torah constitute our benevolent Creator’s fatherly instructions as to how human life was designed to be lived. Each *mitzvah* carries the Creator’s life force. Each exudes His unsurpassable wisdom. Each declares both His love and His aspirations for mankind. Each is a loose lion in somebody’s room. None can be ignored. Each *requires a response* – and responsive thoughts, words, actions. We can either *sh’ma* them the way *Avraham did* OR mock them the way

Pharaoh did. We can either *sh'mar* them like Yosef OR discount them and blow them off like *Ahav* and *Izevel*. We can either *embrace them in love* as Moshe did OR *resist them out of fear and self-will* like *Balak* did. Either we will take great *delight* in them OR we will run away from them. Either we will *marvel at* and *give thanks for* them for the precious gift from our Bridegroom-King that they are OR we will join gleefully with the critics and cynics who insist that they be written off as obsolete, irrelevant, and inapplicable. I call the first approach to Torah's mitzvot *the lover of the Bridegroom-King's approach*²; the other approach I call *the lawless one's approach*³. Which of these approaches will you choose?

The River is Here! Who is Thirsty?

We are presently swimming in the deep end of Torah's *mitzvot* river. Divine Instructions regarding ordinary issues of life are flowing from our Divine Bridegroom's heart through Moshe's lips like the waves at high tide. Our heads are literally spinning with revelation. We are learning about how the *character* and *wisdom* and *ways* of our Glorious King are demonstrated in real and practical matters of daily individual, family, and community life. We are marveling at the exquisite majesty and atmosphere-shifting power of each intricate facet and element of the 'beautiful people' lifestyle our Bridegroom-King has called us to model for the world.

Moshe has led us to deep water – but it is up to us to choose whether we will rejoice and drink *from the fountain to our heart's delight* OR will instead *dig in our heels on the shoreline, clench our teeth tightly, and stubbornly watch our opportunity for refreshment and empowerment slip away*. We have a choice. We can walk with the Bridegroom-King along the narrow but beautiful Bridal Pathway He has lovingly laid out for us - OR we can choose to bolt and run from our high calling and instead go forth independently to plot our own course among the thorns and thistles that litter the landscape of the pathway of the Runaway Bride. It is all up to us. We will choose. The river is indeed here. The fountain is indeed flowing. But we have to decide if we are 'in', or if we are 'out'.

Moshe is showing us the vast differences that exist between the way we will experience and impact life on earth depending upon whether we choose the *pathway of the Bridegroom* on the one hand or the *path of the runaway bride* on the other. Of what will the life we choose consist? Will it consist of strolling arm-in-Arm with our Bridegroom-King, basking in His Presence and His

² See examples, see Psalm 1, Psalm 19, Psalm 119.

³ For examples, see Proverbs 10:8, Proverbs 18:2, Proverbs 28:26, and II Thessalonians 2:8.

Shade? Or will it consist instead of wandering dazedly through sunbaked fields of thorns and thistles in the company of slithering serpents?

The differences between the two pathways between which we will have to choose are being revealed so quickly it is sometimes difficult to keep our minds wrapped around it all. But we still don't want to miss a single word. The quality of life we and those the Holy One places within our spheres of influence will experience in this world hinges upon the choice we will make regarding our life-approach and pathway of travel.

Yet Another Nine Potentially Dangerous Crossroads To Navigate

In today's aliyah Moshe is going to warn us about nine more crossroads at which the adversary will try to distract us from the Bridegroom's Pathway and detour us onto the pathway of the Runaway Bride. As was the case yesterday, all nine warnings fall under the general topic heading of our Divine Bridegroom's *lo tignov* [do not take/appropriate to yourself ...] empowerment. The nine specific critical junctures Moshe wants us to look at today are as follows:

- [1] the temptation to *attribute guilt by association and family name*⁴;
- [2] the temptation to *deny justice and dignity to the powerless*⁵;
- [3] the temptation to *focus only on one's own needs and forget the plight of the less fortunate*⁶;
- [4] the temptation to *take the law – and the right to judge – into our own minds, mouths, and hands*⁷;
- [5] the temptation to *exploit beasts of burden*⁸;
- [6] the temptation to *covet the inheritance of a brother who dies*⁹;
- [7] the temptation to *involve oneself in other people's disputes*¹⁰;
- [8] the temptation to *resort to deception/dishonesty in the marketplace*¹¹;
- [9] the temptation to *forget who your enemies are, drop your guard, and appease those who want to destroy you*¹².

Time does not allow a discussion in these pages of all the areas referenced. We will in this study therefore discuss only the first, last, and a few in between.

⁴ Deuteronomy 24:16 – '*a person shall die for his own sin.*'

⁵ Deuteronomy 24:17-18 – '*do not pervert justice to the stranger or the fatherless ...*'

⁶ Deuteronomy 24:19-22 – '*When you reap your harvest in your field ...*'

⁷ Deuteronomy 25:1-3 – '*If there is a dispute between men, they are to go to the judge ...*'

⁸ Deuteronomy 25:4 – '*Muzzle not an ox that is treading the grain.*'

⁹ Deuteronomy 25:5-10 – '*When brothers dwell together, and one of them dies ...*'

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 25:11-12 – '*When two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near ...*'

¹¹ Deuteronomy 25:13 – '*Maintain not in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light ...*'

¹² Deuteronomy 25:14-16 – '*Keep refreshing in your mind what Amalek did to you on the way ...*'

***In Our Opinion Formation Processes and in Our Courts,
Each Human Being and Situation Must Stand Alone, Removed from
Social Context; Guilt By Association Must Have No Place***

Here is how Moshe kicks off our final aliyah of parsha *Ki Tetze*:

Lo-yumtu avot al-banim

Fathers are not to die upon/in front of/on account of their children,

uvanim lo-yumtu al-avot

neither are children to die upon/in front of/on account of their fathers:

ish b'chet'o yumatu

a man who breaches covenant is to go through the death spiral by himself.

[Deuteronomy 24:16]¹³

As stated in the opening paragraph of this shiur, fallen human beings with pagan mindsets tend to wallow in negativity. They indulge dark, depressing fleshly emotions, let them run wild, shout them to the world, and act them out in ways that are blatantly anti-*shalom*. They let fear morph into paralyzing forms of anti-social paranoia. They let life's irritations evolve into offenses, let anger mutate into outrage, let hurt feelings combust into roots of bitterness, and let minor disagreements turn into major drama. They let the slightest spark they feel careen out of control until they crash and burn in a toxic fit of green-eyed jealousy. They let simple disappointments in life explode into cynicism, hopelessness, and disabling despair. They let fleshly appetites and attractions erupt into lust and perversion. They let feelings of melancholy evolve into depressive episodes, then spiral out of control into homicidal or suicidal ideation. They love to speak platitudes, opine about abstractions, spout generalities, and brand just about everyone and everything they encounter with artificial labels. But the Holy One is different. He is a redeemer – and He sees all people through Redeemer's Eyes. With only one exception – Amalek – His Plan is to use His Covenant People to *bless families*, not *curse them*. **Genesis 12:3**. His strategy is generational in focus. If a man or woman of one generation rejects Him and His Ways, He just turns the focus of His kindnesses and wooing to the next generation. His Passion is to *redeem dysfunctional households and notorious bloodlines*, not *condemn* them. He wants us as His Emissaries on earth to *emulate Him* by focusing on the potential for miraculous transformation that He has placed in every human being and in every family – not write a son off because of a sin his father committed, or write a father off because of a sin of his son.

How does this *mitzvah/mishpat* relate to the Kingdom-life principle of *lo tignov*?

¹³ All transliterations and translations included in this lesson are those of the Rabbi's son.

Let me explain. The Holy One's will for every man, woman and child involves certain opportunities that He has ordained for all members of the human species to enjoy. Among these are:

1. the precious gift of the *breath of life*;
2. *the freedom to think and choose between alternate courses of action*,
3. *the responsibility to steward such material possessions* as the Divine Bridegroom may give him/her power to acquire,
4. *nurturing and training from Torah-submissive parents*,
5. *intimacy and opportunity for procreation with one's chosen soul-mate*, and
6. *the dignity to consider oneself, and be considered by others, as a creature made b'tzelem Elohim (i.e. in the image of the Creator).*

Usually when we think of the *lo tignov of Sinai* we usually focus only on the 'material possession' aspect of the Creator's will for mankind. We realize, rightly, once we see the *mitzvot* that fall under the *lo tignov empowerment* that *if we interfere with – or do not act in cooperation with and foster – each person's stewardship of the material possessions our Covenant Partner in Heaven has entrusted into his/her care, we upset the balance the Holy One has ordained, and fail to fulfill our purpose, destiny, and covenant undertaking.* We realize that if we 'take or appropriate for ourselves any material thing that the Holy One has entrusted to someone else we thereby become 'double agents', purporting to represent our Divine Bridegroom's kingdom but really acting out of self-will, self-interest, and for the advancement of *our own* kingdom. If we 'take' or appropriate to ourselves any of the goods the Holy One has – directly or through Torah - entrusted to our neighbor, we therefore clearly see that in so doing we have abrogated the Kingdom-life principle of *lo tignov*. But the Holy One's thoughts are *far, far higher than our thoughts*. Our Divine Bridegroom's will involves more than His entrustment/distribution of 'material possessions'. As stated above His will for each human being also involves the precious gift of '*breath of life*', *the freedom to think and choose between alternate courses of action*, *the responsibility to steward such material possessions* as the Holy One may give him/her power to acquire, *nurturing and training from Torah-submissive parents*, *intimacy and opportunity for procreation with one's chosen soul-mate*, and *the dignity to consider oneself, and be considered by others, as a creature made b'tzelem Elohim (in the image of the Creator).*

If we as individuals take/appropriate from someone, or if the *goy k'dosh* [holy nation] as an entity, takes/appropriates from someone, *the breath of life*, when our Divine Bridegroom has willed for that person to have it, and when Torah does not declare that such person has forfeited the breath of life, we have abrogated

the life-principle of *lo tignov* just as much as the burglar, the robber, the shop-lifter, and the pick-pocket. Hence while our Covenant Partner in Heaven certainly does not consider the breath of life an ‘unalienable right’ - because it is in fact neither a right nor unalienable, but is instead a very alienable privilege – He has covenanted with us that we are to *sh'ma* His Voice, and take/appropriate no one’s breath of life, unless He specifically tells us to, any more than we are to take/appropriate the material possessions the Holy One has entrusted to someone else. Hence we are not to take a son or daughter’s life just because a father has, through criminal activity, abused and forfeited the privilege of drawing breath that the Creator afforded him. And we are not to take the father’s life just because his son or daughter has, through criminal pursuits, abused and forfeited that privilege. Torah, you see, describes specific ways one can forfeit the privilege of drawing breath – and being related to a criminal is not one of those ways.

The same *lo tignov* principle applies to taking/appropriating from someone the *dignity to consider oneself, and be considered by others, as a creature made b'tzelem Elohim*. Hence, Moshe tells us on behalf of the Holy One:

Lo tatei mishpat ger yatom

Wrest not justice from a foreigner [or] the fatherless,

v'lo tachavol beged almanah

nor take as collateral or payment the widow's clothing.

[Deuteronomy 24:17]

Note the verbs used – *wrest* and *take* – and you will begin to see how this *mitzvah* fits in with the *lo tignov* Kingdom-life principle. And the prophet our Covenant Partner in Heaven then explains the connection between this aspect of *lo tignov* and the covenant the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov made with our fathers:

V'zacharta ki eved hayita b'Mitzrayim

And remember/commemorate that you were a bondservant in Mitzrayim,

vayifdeicha Adonai Eloheicha misham

and that the Holy One your God redeemed you there:

al-ken anochi m'tzaveicha la'asot et-ha-davar hazeh

therefore I direct you to make these instructions a constant reality.

[Deuteronomy 24:18]

One of the *mitzvot of memory* is to remember, and commemorate through practical, humane actions steps to assist the poor, the foreigner, etc. what slavery in Egypt was like, and how the Holy One brought us out of it. We are to commemorate our deliverance by emulating our Divine Bridegroom – to the extent we are able and directed – with regard to our dealing with the foreigners, the fatherless, the

widows, and the poor in our midst. Let our hearts always go out, and let our hands always be open, to the widow, the fatherless, and the foreigner. *Lo tignov* – let us not take/appropriate – either the meager material possessions they have, or their dignity as creatures made *b'tzelem Elohim* [in the image of the Creator]. If we have short memories of our deliverance the rest of the Holy One's instructions, even if lived out to the fullest, will have little impact on our world.

The Corners and Gleanings of the Field

A part of the *lo tignov* Kingdom-life principle is that we whom the Holy One has redeemed and called to the Torah lifestyle are to constantly remember that *we are no better than anyone else*. We are to ever remain aware that our Covenant Partner in Heaven is the One Who gives to us – and to all men - the ability to acquire wealth, that He alone is the One Who provides rain in season, and that He alone is the One Who blesses the work of human hands. We are therefore not to look upon that which He places in our hands as 'ours', but are to remember we are mere stewards. So Moshe tells us *to remember to forget*:

*When you reap your harvest in your field,
and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it:
it [the forgotten sheaf] is for the foreigner, for the fatherless, and for the widow;
in order that the Holy One your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.
And when you beat your olive tree, do not go over the boughs again:
it [the leavings] is to be for the foreigner, for the fatherless, and for the widow.
And when you gather [the grapes of] your vineyard, do not go behind and glean it:
that will be for the foreigner, for the fatherless, and for the widow.
Keep in the forefront of your mind that you were a slave in the land of Mitzrayim:
therefore I instruct you to do this thing.*

[Deuteronomy 24:19-22]

As Yosef was appointed steward of all the wealth of Egypt in the time of famine, and considered it not his own, so are we appointed stewards of all the wealth that comes under our dominion. As it was the poor and disenfranchised of the whole world – not just Ya'akov's descendants - that received grain from Yosef's hand, so likewise are we to be mindful of and to in practical ways bless all the poor and disenfranchised people from all nations who the Holy One brings into our zone of influence. In our case, the Holy One is not calling for a social welfare program run by a secular government (as in Egypt). In our case the Holy One is calling on every individual and family within the Redeemed Community to use his/its own assets to do in microcosm what Yosef, under the name Tzafanat-Paneach, did in macrocosm. We are thus called to 'greater works' than Yosef – especially because Yosef did not expend/sacrifice assets he had produced by his own hand, while that is exactly what we are called upon to do. Oh, but our King is worthy, Beloved!

***The Discipline Meted Out By Us Individually
or by any Legal System we Administrate Must Not
Unduly Infringe Upon the Disciplined Person's Dignity***

Moshe then proceeds to the issue of how the Community of the Redeemed, as a collective, is to deal with those who breach the Covenant and violate the *shalom* of the innocent. Both the adjudication of guilt and the determination of the appropriate disciplinary action is to be left to duly appointed authorities/judges. We in the Community of the Redeemed are not to judge each other. We are not to form opinions of guilt. We are not to declare guilt. We are not to give a second's thought as to what would or would not be appropriate discipline or punishment. That is not our job. Our job is to bring Heaven to earth; not make someone's life like Hell. We are to trust the legal system. We are to honor the Holy One's instructions concerning due process of law. We are to stay focused upon our calling and mission – not the calling and mission of our society's appointed judges. This is a *critical crossroads* we all must let our Bridegroom teach us to navigate. We see things going on. We hear about things that are happening. Our neighbor's outrage tries to attach itself to us like a disease. Our fallen minds want to succumb to the poison of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we do not nip it in the bud the 'law of our minds' runs rampant – screaming self-righteously at us and everyone else. If we are not careful to keep our Covenant-Partner's kindness, mercy, love, longsuffering, and forgiveness characteristics in the forefront of our minds, those minds will revert quickly to the Serpent's level – and our words and actions will follow. We will start to think and speak in terms of labels, and morality, and ideology, and religion, and blame, and accusation, and condemnation. We will become angry, self-righteous, sarcastic, cynical, bitter and mean. If we allow ourselves to react to things we see or hear with criticism and judgment, we will start to employ the precious gift of speech we have been given for negativity instead of blessing the world and setting free the captive. If we do that, we will horribly misrepresent our Bridegroom-King's attributes of goodness, mercy, kindness, and long-suffering, and forgiveness to the world.

Criticizing and judging others is thus the surest way for us lose touch with who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to be doing, which is to be a blessing to all nations. But then, some protest, *how will we deal with evil and sin in others?* How will we *stop people from doing wrong?* The Holy One has that covered. It is someone's job to judge – it is just *not ours*. It is the province of duly appointed and serving judges – and them alone – whether any wrong has occurred and if so what punishment should be inflicted. A fair and impartial trial, with unbiased witnesses and judges, is to be provided to everyone accused of wrongdoing. If, after such a trial, a person is determined to be in the wrong, and in need of correction, the

correction is to be meted out with calmness, fairness and surgical restraint. *A people who represents the Holy One's heart to the world must be very careful how – and with what motivation – they inflict punishment, even on wrongdoers.* Hence Moshe teaches:

*If a controversy arises between men,
they are to come before the seat of judgment, and judgment is to be given them;
the judges are to acquit the righteous and condemn the wicked;
and it will happen, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten,
the judge shall cause him to lie down and to be beaten in front of him,
according to the degree of his wickedness, by number.
He may give him forty stripes, but no more;
lest, if he should give more, and he is beaten beyond these with many stripes,
your brother is considered by you to be less than human.*

[Deuteronomy 25:1-3]

Even a person you consider a wrongdoer is not to be considered 'vile' or 'less than human' to you – or less precious to the Holy One than you are in any way. That is the *lo tignov* principle, as it applies to punishment for wrongdoing. Hence '40 stripes'¹⁴ – administered according to protocol by the appointed shotrim, not by angry individuals with a heart full of violence or vengeance - is a maximum, depending upon the offense of which true witnesses have proven before honest and unbiased judges.

Note: this *mitzvah* relates to matters of which Torah does NOT prescribe a specific punishment. Some offenses prescribe death; others prescribe *karat* [being cut off from one's people]; and still others require *restitution*. The law of 40 stripes relates to ordinary offenses – the things you or I might get offended about in regard to the behavior of our fellow man. See e.g. Acts 22:24. People who walk hand-in-Hand with the Holy One on the pathway of the Bridegroom do not rejoice in the punishment of their brother. Those who choose the path of the runaway bride, however, take delight in forming judgments, accusing, cursing, condemning, and taking vengeance upon others; the adversary has convinced such people that life is all about whatever makes them feel better about themselves.

Honesty in Business Dealings

The next area covered by Moshe under the general heading of *lo tignov* is *how the Holy One's redeemed are to behave themselves in the marketplace of human endeavor*. We are to be Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented vessels of kosher salt, pure light, and faithful witness in the business realm, the entertainment realm, and the political realm of life every bit as much as we are at home and in our faith

¹⁴ The sages subsequently reduced the maximum number of lashes to 39, lest someone accidentally violate Torah through miscounting. This is an example of building 'fences' around the Torah.

communities. After all, the *sh'ma* lifestyle to which the Holy One calls His people is not a matter of doctrines and beliefs and spiritual disciplines. It is a matter of *everyday life*. It is a matter of applying Heavenly Wisdom and injecting Heavenly Goodness into every encounter, interaction, activity, transaction and conversation we have - in the home, the neighborhood, the marketplace, the streets, at the Temple, in every private gathering or conversation, and in every public forum.

Indeed, our marketplace interactions and behaviors are particularly important to our Divine mission on earth. The mitzvot of our Bridegroom-King speak to us as much, or more, about how we are to behave *on the job* and *in the marketplace* as he does about how we are to worship.

*Maintain not in your bag diverse weights, a great and a small.
Nor keep in your house different measures, a great and a small.
You are to employ a perfect and just weight. You to employ a perfect and just measure.
that your days may be long in the land which the Holy One your God gives you.*

*For all who do such things - all who do unrighteously,
are an abomination to the Holy One your God.*

[Deuteronomy 25:13-16]

Before the advent of the digital and mechanical scales, most business transactions were conducted via ‘balance scales’. The way these were designed to work was that an exact predetermined weight was placed on one side [the *merchant’s side*], and the goods the purchaser desired to purchase were placed on the other side [the *customer’s side*]. If a customer wanted to purchase a pound of potatoes, for instance, the grocer would put what purported to be a one-pound weight on the merchant’s side of the scale, and the customer would start piling potatoes on the customer’s side of scale. When the sides of the scale stood perfectly balanced, then the grocer and the customer both knew that they were conducting a fair transaction for one pound of potatoes. Under this system however dishonest merchants could ‘cheat’ unsuspecting customers in numerous ways, for example by using for some customers a scale on which he had loaded a fourteen-ounce weight in the place of a standard one-pound weight. Most customers would never notice the 2-ounce difference, and would walk away thinking they had purchased a pound of potatoes, and having paid the price for a pound of potatoes, but having received only 14 ounces.

If an unscrupulous grocer had a personal grudge or prejudice against the customer, or if he thought the customer was gullible, he would, at the time of transacting, pull out from under his counter the fraudulent scale. If, however, the customer in question was a colleague, or appeared wary, or if he was buying rather than selling, he would pull out the true scale. Alas, in human experience, it was usually the foreigner, the uneducated poor man, or the distracted widow or orphan – i.e. the

specially protected classes of Torah - who got cheated in such a way.

Moshe wants us to understand that the *sh'ma* lifestyle, and the *lo tignov* aspect of our covenant with the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov, both call forth honesty and ethical behavior in all business dealings – and in the way we do business with people. We are, after all, to be blessed by the Holy One in our dealings – we do not need to *cheat* anyone. We do not need to invent creative ways to take other people's money – our Divine Bridegroom will provide all our needs abundantly, above all we could ask or hope or think.

What About the Double Standard?

Hmmm. Could the concept of two sets of scales refer not only to cheating in commerce, but also to employing a double standard in judging ourselves and others? Could Moshe be saying that the '*lo tignov*' directive means that we must be careful not to be either easier – or harder – on ourselves or our children than we are on others? Do we tend to judge Arabs more favorably than Jews [or vice versa]? Do we tolerate more ineptitude or immorality from conservative politicians than we do from liberal ones - or vice versa? Do we tend to hold our spouses and children to different standards of conduct - higher or lower - than we hold the spouses and children of others? Do we accept in/from ourselves thoughts, attitudes, words, and conduct that we scoff at self-righteously in others?

It is time to consider the 'scales' we use very, very carefully. As the Master taught us, ***“With whatever measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*** Matthew 7:2.

Remembering Amalek Forever

Ki Tetze is about to close as it opened - with talk of *an enemy*. As the parsha began, Moshe was speaking of what we are to do '*when you go out l'milchamah al-oyveicha* – to confront your enemy. He closes by reminding us that there is one enemy that all of us will have with us forever.

Moshe makes it clear that we are not to go looking for trouble around our world. We are not to attack our closest neighbors – people like the Ammoni, the Edomi, and the Moavi, But that does not mean we are to be pacifists, or forget how to fight. Why? Because there is one group of people against whom our Covenant Partner in Heaven Himself is at war at all times – see Exodus 17:16, where we are informed that: ***“The Holy One has sworn: 'The Holy One will be at war with Amalek¹⁵ from generation to generation.'”*** What the Holy One has *sworn* is an *eternal reality*. And one of the things He has sworn is that He will be **at war with**

¹⁵ *Amalek* is *ayin, mem, lamed, kuf*, Strong's Hebrew word #6002, pronounced *am-aw-lake'*. Strong's says the name means “*dweller in a valley*”.

Amalek forever. One of the things that we should always “*see the Father doing*”, therefore, is *making war with Amalek*. Since the Holy One is our *covenant partner*, it naturally flows that not only are *our enemies* are *His enemies*, but also that *His enemies are our enemies*. If we choose the Pathway of the Bridegroom one of the things we will have to do will be to *deal with a constant state of war* with Amalek. It is best therefore that we come to understand things like *who Amalek is*, and *how to recognize him* when he appears in our midst, and, of course, *how we are supposed to deal with him*. And that is what the concluding verses of parsha *Ki Tetze* are all about. Moshe gives us another *mitzvah of memory*, telling us:

*Keep in the forefront of your mind what Amalek did to you
by the way as you were coming forth out of Mitzrayim;
how he approached you by the way, and struck your stragglers-
all who were feeble behind you when you were faint and weary;
and he had no reverence for Elohim.*

*Therefore it is to happen, when the Holy One your God has given you rest
from all your enemies round about,
in the land which the Holy One your God gives you for an inheritance to possess,
you are to blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky; you are not to forget.*

[Deuteronomy 25:17-19]

Who Is Amalek?

First of all, we need to know *who Amalek is* and who *Esav is*. Amalek was a descendant of Esav – a grandson born through union of Esav’s son Eliphaz with a concubine named Timnah. **Genesis 36:12**. Edom is therefore the ‘mainstream’ of peoples descended from Esav; Amalek, on the other hand, is *a wild branch off of Edom*. He is the absolute worst of what Esav has to offer. He is Esav’s ‘dark side’ in its fullest, most hideous, human form. What does that mean? Think about it. We know Esav to be unspiritual – to be driven completely by physical and sensual/emotional motivations, and by sentimentalism, rather than by the word of the Holy One. See Genesis 25:29-34 [where he chose a pot of boiling lentils over the firstborn’s birthright], and see also Genesis 27:1-4 [where he refused to advise his father of the deal he had made with Ya’akov regarding the firstborn’s birthright, and pretended to qualify for the *father’s blessing* – which was one aspect of which he had sold], as well as Genesis 27:41 [where he acted completely contrary to the Holy One’s way – holding a grudge against Ya’akov, and determining in his heart to kill him]. We also know that Esav/Edom, though unspiritual, and incapable of comprehending the *sh’ma* lifestyle, at least had a sentimentalism that rendered him/it tolerable. There could be peaceful co-existence, though not close camaraderie, with Esav/Edom. At times he/it would go into a rage, and breathe threats of violence. But because Esav/Edom is sensual, and materialistic, and has at least a small bit of fear of the Holy One in him/it, Esav/Edom is satisfied and satiated with taking Ya’akov’s *possessions* – and does not demand his life. **Genesis 33**.

Mainstream Esav/Edom *growls fiercely* at Ya'akov and his descendants from time to time, and at regular intervals gets full of itself and threatens violence and destruction for the People of the Holy One – but what he really wants is not Ya'akov's death or destruction. Mainstream Esav/Edom merely covets Ya'akov's *wealth*, influence, favor, and material blessings – *i.e.* the physical, tangible, worldly part of the Patriarchal birthright. But Amalek, the wild branch off of Edom, is *a totally different story*. Amalek hates Ya'akov's descendants *just for the sake of hate*. Amalek does not know or want to know, and has NO KNOWLEDGE OF, FEAR OF, OR REVERENCE FOR, the HOLY ONE whatever. **Deuteronomy 25:18**. Amalek simply wants Ya'akov's descendants DEAD – at whatever cost to himself and his people. Amalek is therefore the prototypical *terrorist*. He lurks in the shadows, plotting and scheming and stalking human beings like prey. He always attacks the weak, the helpless, and the defenseless. He will strike Ya'akov every time and in every way he thinks he can get by with it. He will use frontal attacks when he thinks he has the upper hand and public opinion on his side. He will use sneak attacks – hit and run, dodge and weave, duck and cover – when he senses that Ya'akov is stronger. See **Exodus 17:8; Deuteronomy 25:17**. So please realize that, however peace loving you may be, and however much you may desire to *buy the world a Coke* and hold hands and sing *Kumbayah* around the fire with the other nations of the world, coexistence with Amalek is never peaceful. He is ever-present, ever planning, ever scheming against you, and ever watching for an opportunity to strike you, your children, and your children's children. Killing you and terrorizing your children is what he *lives* for. Planning your destruction – devising the 'final solution' – is the purpose and drive of his life. The question is therefore not *if* he will attack – it is *when* and *where* and *how*.

Amalek thinks he will find great delight – and perhaps some form of make-believe state of *nirvana* – if he can just find a way to *kill you*. If you are not prepared for him, he will *do just that*. He teaches his children to *blame you for all bad things in the world*. He insists that economic hard times are – and indeed that everything unpleasant in the world is - your fault. And he is so self-deceived that he actually believes this nonsense *with all his heart*. Unbeknownst to him, however, it is not *you* that he really hates – it is really your Covenant Partner in Heaven that he hates and against Whom he deigns to make war. Why does Amalek hate the Holy One? He hates the Holy One because the Holy One *gave the power of blessing to Avraham instead of Nimrod; to Yitzchak instead of Yish'mael; and to Ya'akov instead of Esav*. Like Nimrod, Amalek is *a mighty hunter*. Like Yish'mael, he *lives by the sword*. Like Esav, he *relishes the spilling of the blood and eating the spoil of the prey*. Unlike the others, however, Amalek is utterly *insatiable*, completely *implacable*, thoroughly *intractable*, and completely *merciless*. No man's true ally,

Amalek is wily enough to tolerate Nimrod, Esav and Yish'mael under the principle '*the enemy of my enemy is my friend*'. He knows how to manipulate Nimrod, and Yish'mael, and Esav to serve his purposes by stirring up into white-hot passion the smoldering enmity of those peoples toward the chosen ones of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov.

According to the sages, Esav is represented by the mindset and worldview of Rome – represented in today's world by the *Western culture*. Esav is, therefore, *the anti-Semitic worldview of Western Europe and America*. Some sages of Israel over the centuries have specifically associated Esav with *organized Christianity* – particularly in the form of the Catholic Church and its early offshoots. While organized Christianity in its various forms has often breathed out anti-Semitic rhetoric, just like Esav/Edom, organized Christianity also has a sentimental, sensual side. There is, after all, still some fear of the Holy One in most branches of organized Christianity. Hence, there can, in most instances, with some exceptions, live in a state of more or less *peaceful co-existence* with it for extended periods of time. From time to time, however, terrorists do arise from within and take over organized Christianity - hence, the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Jewish people during the Crusades, the bloodbath of the Spanish Inquisition, and the collaboration with Hitler during the Holocaust. Amalek, however, is far more dangerous. Amalek is the darkest side of *Rome gone berserk*. Amalek is Western Europe's 'little horn' [Daniel 7:8, 11], the 'king who exalts himself' [Daniel 11:36-45]. He is coming indeed. Against him we have *no choice* but to make war. Peaceful coexistence with him is simply *not an option* that either he or the Holy One will ever allow us to entertain.

Our Bridegroom-King's Strategy To Defend Against and Defeat Amalek

Let us therefore remember *the strategy that defeats Amalek*. It is found in Exodus 17:11:

*B'nei Yisrael prevailed as long as Moshe held up his hands.
But when Moshe's hands were let down the Amaleki prevailed.*

What are *Moshe's hands*? Remember what I said earlier about the ten Words of the Holy One being given *hands* and *feet* by the *mitzvot*? I believe the *hands* we are to use in our battle with Amalek are the *mitzvot* of the Holy One that he taught us. Let us therefore lift up the *mitzvot* of the Holy One – hold them high *for the world to see*. In so doing, we will put Moshe on a rock [remember, a rock is always a symbol of Messiah] - and in so doing we will hold up Moshe's 'hands'. But even that is not the real key to success. The real key to success is Y'hoshua. Exodus 17:13 makes it clear: *Y'hoshua overcame the Amaleki with the sword*. Y'hoshua [Joshua], son of Nun, was a real man, of the tribe and lineage of *Efrayim*. But his story is

included in Torah because he is a forerunner to, and symbol of, Messiah. His name means *the Holy One is salvation*. His namesake – He that came after him but was before him – is Yeshua of Natzret.

The way to battle Amalek is *to lift up Moshe's hands* – the *mitzvot* of the Holy One – for the world to see – *as we follow Yeshua*. Even in that context however it appears a *sword* will be involved

Questions For Today's Study

1. In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 the Holy One, through Moshe, instructed His people that if a married man dies without children, it is the duty of his brother to marry his widow.

*If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies, and has no son,
the wife of the dead shall not be married outside to a stranger:
her husband's brother shall lie with her, and take her unto himself as his wife,
and he is to fulfill the responsibility of a husband's brother to her.
It will happen that the first son she bears is to succeed
in the name of his brother who is dead,
in order that his name not be blotted out of Yisra'el.*

[A] What reason did the Holy One give for this instruction? Explain what this means.

[B] What procedure was to be followed if the man's brother refused to marry the widow?

[C] What does the term "*the Family of the Un-sandaled*" mean?

[D] This passage of Torah was the beginning point at which one group of religious leaders sought to test the faithfulness of Yeshua's Torah teaching. Read Matthew 22:23-33. The question asked by the Sadducees - who do not believe in resurrection from the dead - gave Yeshua a wonderful chance to announce that Torah had been superseded and was no longer relevant [*if* that had truly happened]. This was His chance to describe whatever "new religion" He intended to found, simply by saying that the question was irrelevant, because Torah was no longer valid. But look carefully at what Yeshua said to these Sadducees. Did Yeshua's teaching "do away" with the Torah's instructions regarding what is often referred to as "*levirate marriage*"?

Did Yeshua indicate (when He had the perfect chance to do so) that the instructions of Torah that a surviving brother was to marry his deceased brother's widow, had been modified in any way? Explain what you think Yeshua meant by His reply to the Sadducees (who do not believe in resurrection from the dead).

2. Verses 13-16 of chapter 25 deal with having "light and heavy" sets of scales, and "large and small" sets of measures.

*Keep not in your bag diverse weights, a great and a small.
Keep not in your house diverse measures, a great and a small.
You are to have a perfect and just weight.
You are to have a perfect and just measure.
in order that your days may be long in the land the Holy One your God gives you.
For all who do such things, [even] all who make business transactions unrighteously,
are an abomination to the Holy One your God.*

[A] What reason can you think of for a person having two different types of scales or measuring devices in his or her business?

[B] What principle or value is the Holy One establishing in His people by these *mitzvot*?

[C] Verse 16 says people who use two sets of scales or measures are an “**abomination**” [KJV] to the Holy One. We recently looked up the word abomination and looked at various things our Covenant Partner called by those terms. What are some of the other things the Holy One classifies as “*abominations*”?

3. *Ki Tetze* concludes with the words “*do not forget*”! The subject matter we are to remember is troubling to our sensitivities in 21st Century America. We are told to remember what the Amaleki did to us along the way when we came out of Egypt - and we are told to blot out the memory of Amalek from under Heaven. Moshe remembers what it was like. The Amaleki had no fear of the Holy One, Moshe reminds us. Even though *the Radiant Cloud of the Presence* of the Almighty King of Heaven traveled with Israel, and even though the Holy One had just performed the wonder and sign of the splitting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army, the Amaleki were totally unimpressed. They ignored, and considered as nothing, the Presence of the pillar of fire and cloud. They snuck up and “bushwhacked” all the weak of our people, who were lagging behind the main group. They thereby demonstrated their total depravity and insensitivity to the Holy One.

Now we will see that the Holy One intended to use the very band of released slaves on which they had no pity to be the instrument of their judgment.

[A] Turn back to Genesis 36:12. Whose descendants were the Amaleki?

[B] Read Exodus 17:8-16. What do you think it was about the Amaleki that the Holy One found it necessary to be constantly at war with, that necessitates destruction?

[C] Realize that when Moshe speaks these words in Deuteronomy it has been 38 or 39 years since the events of Exodus 17. Realize that many, if not all, of the Amaleki who attacked Israel at Refidim were dead - and that surely their children (who did not participate in the attack) were now the leaders of the Amaleki people. Can you reconcile the instruction to blot out the memory of Amalek

from under Heaven with the opening verse of today's aliyah which says that fathers are not to die for their children, nor children die for their fathers, but for each man's own sin is he to die?

4. Today's haftarah reading concludes the fifth "haftarah of consolation. In these verses, the Holy One makes a renewal of His covenant vows with Israel.

*For this is [as] the waters of Noach to me;
for as I have sworn that no more will the waters of Noach go over the eretz,
even so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor rebuke you.
For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed;
but my lovingkindness shall not depart from you,
neither shall my covenant of shalom be removed,
says the Holy One who has mercy on you.*

[A] To what covenant does the Holy One liken His renewed covenant with Israel's remnant?

[B] What two things did the Holy One promise Israel's remnant in this passage?

[C] What does the Holy One say will happen before His love for and faithfulness to the Remnant of Israel and His covenant with them will pass away?

[D] Yesha'yahu says the Holy One's covenant with the Remnant is a "covenant of completion and peace"? In Hebrew such a covenant is called a **B'rit Shalom**. This is basically a legal contract. On a piece of paper, list what you think are the terms of the Holy One's "covenant of completion and peace" [**B'rit Shalom**].

5. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today Shaul of Tarsus concludes his instruction of what should be done to one who had violated the Torah *mitzvah* not to "uncover his father's skirt". I think you will see that Shaul's teaching corresponds exactly with Torah – and the theme of this week's parsha *Ki Tetze* – *purge the evil from among you!*

*In the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah,
when you have gathered together, and my spirit,
with the power of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah,
deliver such a one to Ha-satan for the chastisement of the flesh,
that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua.
Your boasting about this is not good.
Do you not know that a little seor leavens the whole lump?
Purge out the old seor, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened.
For indeed Messiah, our Pesach, has been sacrificed in our stead.*

[A] To whom did *Shaul* instruct the Corinthian believers to "hand over" the man who had violated the Torah *mitzvah* not to "uncover his father's skirt"?

[B] In Strong's, look up the word translated as "hand over". Write the

Greek word and the various definitions given by Strong's. What would be the corresponding Hebrew word, and how would its meaning differ?

[C] Now look up the word translated as "*Satan*" in verse 5. Write the Greek word and the definition(s) given by Strong's. What is this word in Hebrew?

[D] Considering the definitions you have found in response to subparts [B] and [C], what do you think the punishment directed by Shaul really consisted of? Imagine you found the diary of 'Ha-Satan' regarding this incident. What do you think would be in that diary regarding this incident?

[E] If the man Shaul was talking about had lived in the land of Israel, in a Torah community, would his punishment have been different? Why or why not?

[F] Read on to verses 7-12. Why is Shaul concerned that the Corinthians cleanse their community of the "leaven" of pride and boasting concerning the man who uncovered his father's skirt? What season is approaching?

6. Some have expressed the opinion [it is, of course, impossible to know] that Shaul shed some light on what ultimately happened to the man who violated the Torah prohibition of "*uncovering his father's skirt*" in his second letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 2, verses 5-11. Read that passage.

[A] Do you think Shaul is talking about the same situation, and why or why not?

[B] If you think Shaul is referring in II Corinthians 2:5-11 to the man who uncovered his father's skirt, what do you think this passage tells you about what the Corinthians did to this man?

[C] What is the "*leaven*" and what is the "*whole lump*" about which Shaul is speaking?

*May we find the heart of our Covenant Partner in Heaven,
and hear the Voice of Messiah calling to us, in every **mitzvah** of Torah,
and may we quickly and decisively **purge the evil from our midst**. Shabbat Shalom!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 27:7-8

Hear¹⁶, O Holy One, when I cry with my voice.

Have mercy¹⁷ also on me, and answer¹⁸ me.

*When you said, "**Seek my face¹⁹**," my heart said to you,*

"I will seek your face, O Holy One."

¹⁶ The word translated *hear* is *sh'ma*, Strong's Hebrew word #8085.

¹⁷ The word translated *mercy* is *chanan*, Strong's Hebrew word #2603.

¹⁸ The word translated *answer* is '*anah* [*ayin, nun, vav, hey*] Strong's Hebrew word #6030, pronounced *aw-naw'*. The first usage is in Genesis 18:27, to describe Avraham's response to the Holy One's advisement that judgment is coming on S'dom and G'morrah. Hence, '*anah* refers to the second side of a discourse or conversation – *the response of the hearer to what the speaker says*. In courtroom procedure, it is the answer given by the witness to the question posed.

¹⁹ The Hebrew phrase translated *seek My Face* is *bakashu p'ney'i*.