

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Ki Tetze:*** **Deuteronomy 22:1-30**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 54:2-3**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 5:2**

Put away/ purge the ra from among/within you.

[Deut. 22:21, 22 and 24]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 27:3;

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

Lo-tir'eh et-shor achicha o et-seyo nidachim – If you see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray ... *v'hit'alamta mehem* – you are not to ignore it **Deuteronomy 22:1a.**

Do you think of yourself more highly than you ought? Do you consider yourself better than other people? More intelligent? More informed? More moral? More spiritual? More ideologically advanced/aware? More theologically 'correct'? Do you feel you have earned the right - or have the 'anointing' - to tell the 'wealthy' of the world what they should and/or must do with their riches, or the poor what they should do with the alms and/or public assistance checks they receive?

Do you think of some individuals, groups, or ethnicities as being unjustly 'privileged'? Are you envious of other people's financial or social status? Do you look at the world as divided up between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' – and find yourself siding with one or the other group? Do you delight in seeing your neighbor's sin exposed? Do you thirst to see the mighty fall? Do you take pleasure in the suffering of whoever it may be that you consider 'wicked'?

Do you often find yourself sitting around with a cadre of like-minded acquaintances pontificating about what people who have never asked – and would never ask - your opinion should think, believe, and do? Ah, Beloved – the Holy One's Kingdom of Priests cannot afford to indulge such presumptuous, ego-centric folly. The Holy One's redeemed 'Kingdom of Priests' cannot perform the essential blessing-to-every-family-on-the-face-of-the-earth function we have been assigned if we allow ourselves to look at the world – or anyone or anything in it - through such cynical, arrogant, self-important lens. We are not here to impose the ways of Torah on anyone else; we are here to INTERNALIZE those ways and find ways to apply them personally. What we are here to do is model the good and peaceful ways of Torah, not lecture the uninterested masses about morality or 'social

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justice'. We are called to humbly serve people of all stations, economic levels, ethnicities, and ideologies - not terrorize them like some sort of Torah Taliban or Gestapo. We need to put away the *ra* within us before we can hope to deal effectively with whatever *ra* we may perceive in any of the people who live around us.

Impulses of the Fallen Flesh and Pseudo-Intellect – and Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Impulse Management of Those Impulses

The Holy One knows that His Covenant People have fleshly impulses that threaten their spiritual and physical health, their interpersonal relationships, their mission, and their destiny. As a wise Covenant Partner/Mentor, He has a plan to teach us to face, deal with, navigate through or around, overcome, and transcend those fleshly impulses. It is all in *His words*. He has programmed overcoming power into His *dibrot/devarim*, His *mitzvot* [KJV 'commandments'], His *mishpatim* [KJV 'judgments'], His *chukim* [KJV 'ordinances'], His *piqqudim* [KJV statutes], and His *edut* [KJV 'testimonies'].

Let's get more specific. Do you remember at Sinai, when the Holy One spoke from the thick cloud and said ***Lo tignav*** [you will not steal], and ***Lo tachmod*** [you will not covet]? The One Who spoke these *dibrot* knew that as a result of what happened in the Garden all human beings have 'materialism' impulses. Just as Chava, when under the influence of Serpentine suggestion, suddenly saw things in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that were not there, so it is with us and the material things of the world. What the sages call the *yetzer hara* – *i.e.* the self-obsession tendency present in all our fallen flesh and pseudo-intellect – kicks into high gear. We allow ourselves to think that material things – especially someone else's material things - would make us happy/happier. We let the lines that divide the material things are allotted to us and for us by the Holy One from what he has allotted to someone else blur. We indulge our pseudo-intellectual propensity to justify taking what the Holy One intends for someone else or someone else's family, bloodline, or sphere of influence. We envision what we can – or would like to - take when no one is looking. As John Lennon, under the influence of some drug and/or dark spirit once wrote: '*Imagine no possessions – I wonder if you can!*' That is not the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented way of dealing with materialist impulses of the fallen flesh. So ... if what Lennon talked about is not what the Holy One has in mind ... *what is?* What does Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented respect for the personal property interests the Holy One has assigned to others consist of? Moshe is about to give us a seminar. He is going to follow the same pattern the Holy One used with him in the Mishpatim Discourse [Exodus 22:1 ff], and lay out for us a series of hypothetical situations through meditation on which we are supposed to discover how to give real, practical, hands-on application to the ***Lo***

tignav and *Lo tachmod* empowerments.

We Are Our Brother's Keeper – and So Much More!

Why should we concern ourselves with our brother's wandering lambs? What is it to us that a neighbor's ox has broken tether and is grazing the highway right-of-way? Why are the pagan chants of '*Finders, Keepers*', '*You weren't using it!*', and '*we are going to burn the (extremely disrespectful adjective deleted) down*' so grossly unbiblical? Why are *envy* and *jealousy*, *covetousness*, *greed*, and *idleness/sloth* considered 'deadly' sins? Why are disrespectful things like *looting*, *stealing*, *cheating* and *robbing*, *trespassing on* and/or *defacing someone else's property*, and *breaking windows* and *setting fires* in shops or courthouses completely incompatible with a *Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society*? Because private property interests are an essential part of the Holy One's Grand Plan of redemption and restoration. The Holy One watches over all things He has created, and cares about all men. He has chosen to allocate the material resources of His Creation among men, households, bloodlines, and nations in a particular way. To some He gives more; to some He gives less – all for a strategic Kingdom reason. He never gives any man, household, bloodline, or nation too much; and he never gives any man, household, bloodline, or nation too little. It all works together for good. It is, after all a matter of three things that are always in play: 1. an open portal of grace/favor is being provided; 2. a training protocol in the area of stewardship – *i.e.* of learning wisdom and patience in regard to reaping and sowing, consuming and sharing - is being taught; and 3. challenges of patience, trust, and honor are being presented.

The Holy One does not subscribe to socialist theory. He invests property interests according to a Grand Divine Plan, allocating to each person, household, bloodline, and nation what will best accomplish the purposes of the Kingdom. He alone gives life – and that means He has the absolute right to decide who, at any given time, should be rich, and who should be poor – and who should be in every category in between those extremes. He gives to each person the ability to acquire and manage wealth; what we do with that ability is up to us. If we pout and complain about being a 'have not', or fret about others who appear to be 'haves', our poverty and that of our family will just increase. If we go further, and actually try to take from others what the Holy One has entrusted to us - whether by deception, theft, manipulation, or either government-mandated or gang-assisted reallocation – whatever we take at another's expense will slip right through our fingers like grains of sand, and in the end our condition will just get worse and our shame greater. It is a simple matter of sowing and reaping. We have to learn not to substitute our judgment – which, after all, is horribly corrupted by self-interest and ethnic pride - for His. The Holy One is also no Marxist; He rewards those who use

and manage material things wisely with increase, and He takes away from those who misuse and mismanage material things foolishly – doing so for their own good and that of their families. See **Matthew 25:24-29**. More on this later in this shiur; for now, however, let's remind ourselves of the bigger picture.

***The Intense Challenge of Staying on the Road, And In the Lane,
that The Holy One has Called Us To Travel***

Much in the way that the Holy One renewed Moshe's mind back in first days after *Matan Torah* by bombarding him with mind-bending, emotion-triggering hypotheticals and examples, even so, in the last days before we enter the land and set about the Kingdom Mission in earnest, Moshe is ready to renew our minds with similarly challenging hypotheticals and examples. Just in today's aliyah alone the prophet will regale us with hypotheticals about *free-ranging livestock*, about *gender non-specific clothing*, *unprotected mothers alone with their children*, *unguarded rooftops*, *species intermixing*, *fabric blending*, *hard-to-please husbands*, *hard-to-live-with wives*, *promiscuous women*, *lustful men*, and *neglectful parents*. What do these hypotheticals all have in common? They all can - and *inevitably will, if not brought into harmony with the Holy One's instructions* – stimulate the *yetzer hara* – *i.e.* the animalistic, self-destructive inclination of man to think dark thoughts, indulge dark emotions, break communion with the Holy One, step away from the strait gate and narrow way of the Covenant, pursue vanity, engage in folly, and ultimately careen out of control down the broad path that leads to destruction.

We all have the *yetzer hara* – *and each of us has a unique matrix of easily manipulated yetzer hara triggers*. When we enter the 'war zones', the '*fleshly appetite stimulation midways*', and the '*drama and trauma mazes*' of life, these triggers get activated – and our commitment to the Holy One and His Redemptive, Restorative Plan gets put to the test. Moshe wants us to be ready. Controversial hypotheticals and examples that will challenge our prideful pseudo-intelligence and abstract constructs of 'morality', 'justice', 'right' and 'wrong, and 'good' and 'evil' to the core, *coming right up!*

***Recognizing and Dealing with Our Most Challenging
Individual and Communal 'Yetzer hara Triggers'***

Moshe is not dumping a set of rules on us. He is training us to think – and react - like the Messiah. He knows this kind of life approach does not by any means come 'naturally'. He will have to train us. And the first thing he will need to do is teach to be on the lookout for, and diligent in our dealings with, our own *yetzer hara* triggers – *i.e.* the *situations that we are likely to encounter* in the course of life that will have the ability to bring out the latent beastliness – instead of the Messiah's

wisdom, understanding, and goodness - in us. The prophet wants us to understand that tendencies toward narcissism, selfishness, sensuality, sexuality, sentimentality, and self-indulgence inhere in our species' fallen nature. No one is exempt – not even us. Only when we know where the dangerous, Covenant-derailing seed of *ra* within us tends to lurk, and *in what situations/under what conditions it is most likely to sprout*, can we hope to effectively purge it from our lives, households, and communities. Thank Heaven the Covenant provides a powerful antidote protocol for every venomous bite of the *yetzer hara*, but it is far better to nip it in the bud, and keep it from biting us – or our children – in the first place.

Understanding the Times and the Seasons - And How They Relate to our Yetzer Hara Triggers

We are now well into the sixth month of the Biblical calendar. It is only a few short weeks until the great and awesome day of *Yom Kippur*. On that day we will, one-by-one, pass solemnly before the Creator. On that day we will, one-by-one, be called forward to the King's judgment seat to give account for what we have done in the year just past with the precious gifts He has entrusted to us. We will be called upon to give account for what we have done with the *breath of life* that He so lovingly breathed into us. We will give account for what we have done with the *faculties of sight, hearing, perception, and cognitive thought* that He so brilliantly designed into us. We will give account for how we have chosen to employ the *organs of intelligent speech and inscription* that He entrusted to no other species in all of Creation. We will also give account for what we have done with *the multiple opportunities He has given us for engagement with and impact upon other human beings*. On *Yom Kippur* we will stand before the Bridegroom-King's *bema* – and He will pronounce over us and our future whatever He in His infinite wisdom deems most advantageous to His Grand Redemptive Plan. We know we have nothing with which to commend ourselves. We know that our failures of essential purpose will be obvious. We know that all our departures from His Will – and each time we went A.W.O.L. from the glorious Mission He assigned to us, large and small, will testify against us. We know that all of our dalliances with the King's enemies, and our every deviance from His Instructions, will be exposed. We know exactly what kind we *deserve* – and would give ourselves. But we desire – and hope for – something far better. We seek another chance. We desire another opportunity – to this time serve Him more faithfully, and to serve our flesh, with its carnal desires and attitudes, and our culture, with its false priorities, far, far less. We know we have no control over the decree He will issue. We must depend totally upon the atoning blood that has been spilled for us. It is a humbling thought. It makes us tremble. But we are confident nevertheless. We know the Covenant is sure. We know His Mercy is real. We know He can see beyond our past and present failings to the potential that He deposited in us. We know loves a

reclamation project. And we want to be His next one. So, in the month called ‘Elul’, we are passionately seeking to reconnect with our King’s Will and Ways. We are seeking, in this season, to ‘return to who you are, return to what you are, return to where you are born and reborn again’. We are readjusting the pitch of our lives and lifestyles back to the ‘true tone’ of His Torah. We call the process *t’shuvah* – i.e. *turning* – and it is our magnificent obsession. How are the *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* protocols of the month of Elul, when the King is in the Field, working for you, Dear Reader? Are you at least a step or two *closer to Your Bridegroom’s heart* than you were a few days ago? Are you more securely embedded in Messiah’s wounds than you were prior to Rosh Chodesh? *L’shanah tova tiketeivu v’tchatimu!*

Remember the theme of Moshe’s current download: We are being challenged to build a *Kingdom-of-Heaven Scented Society*. We are here to *prepare the way for the Glorious King*. So in all things, at all times, no matter what circumstance, whether we are going out or coming in, we are to ‘*overcome evil* - but we are to do it only as, when, and how the Holy One directs, in ways and according to protocols that are kind, wise, good, and advance the redemptive purposes and plan of the Holy One. Through the passageway of Torah, let us today press in even further to the Bridegroom’s heart ... and into the place of hiding prepared for us in the places Messiah received wounds on our behalf.

Embracing the Dominant Themes of the Parsha

As we have previously discussed, the first of the two predominant messages of *Ki Tetze* is the oft-repeated instruction *bi’artah hara miqraveicha* – i.e. *you are to put away/purge the ra [self-obsession] from among/within you*. This message provides a particularly appropriate focus for this month of the Biblical year – the cycle of the moon in which we both hear the *shofar* blown and read from Psalm 27 daily in response to our Bridegroom-King’s call to *take an accounting* of our lives. The accounting called for in this season is actually *a full-blown personal audit* of what we have done, during the last year, with the precious gifts of life-breath, the capacity for cognitive thought and intelligible speech, and the opportunity for interaction with and influence upon Creation and the people we encounter in it. Step one of this personal audit is to seriously evaluate the status of our relationship with our Divine Bridegroom. Step two is to honestly assess the quality of our relationships with members of our family. Step three is to accurately appraise both the positive and negative effects our speech and actions are having on our fellow men. Step four is to re-evaluate both our *attitudes toward* and all our *dealings with* our enemies. Step five is to evaluate the effectiveness of – and recognize the flaws in - our stewardship of Creation.

In the context of this season of personal audit Moshe's '*put away/purge the evil from among/within you*' cry is exactly the message we need to *sh'ma* if we are going to allow the Creator to renew our life as we prepare to begin another cycle. As we begin today's study therefore let us commit ourselves to look at our Bridegroom's Torah not as a history book or a 'book of law', but *as a mirror into our souls*. As we read this aliyah let us compare what is written there – *i.e.* the Friend of the Bridegroom's description of what we as the Bride is supposed to look like and be - to the present thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. Let us strive to see with Divinely enhanced vision where and to what degree our thoughts and priorities and attitudes and appetites and approaches to life and to the Holy One's creation have *strayed from our Divine Bridegroom's design*, and are therefore *in need of adjustment*. Let us consent to let the Torah be for us a guidebook for 'in flight corrections'. Let us not stop there. Let us look at each *mitzvah* of Torah as *something far more than words on a page*. Let us look closer - and ask to be shown each *mitzvah through Messiah's eyes*. Why did Messiah teach that not one *yod* nor accent mark would pass from the Torah? Because He has a *purpose* and a *function* for each mitzvah to fulfill in our lives.

There is not a wasted word in Torah. Each Hebrew letter is a hieroglyph, and every Hebrew word combines those hieroglyphs into a picture – and as you surely have heard, *every picture tells a story*. We need to look intently at the specific words that Torah employs. We need to take those words at face value. And we need to conform our every thought, word, and action to them. But that is just the beginning. We also need gaze longingly beyond the surface of the words to the very emotions and intentions of the One Who revealed them to Moshe. We need to ask for the enlightening breath of *Ruach Kadosh* [Holy Spirit] to open our eyes and show us the 'wondrous things' that He has designed into His Torah. See **Psalm 119:18**. We need to deny ourselves and surrender to Messiah's 'light yoke', and walk with Him into deeper and deeper levels of the spiritual essence of each *mitzvah*. And we need to continue meditating upon and exploring the mystery of every level of meaning in His Words of Life Instruction until we grasp THE DIVINE STORY which every Torah picture is telling. Let us therefore commit our time and energy and passion to always look *deeper than surface level at every mitzvah of Torah*. That is not by any means to deny that the *mitzvot* of Torah are pertinent, relevant, and valuable on the surface level. The surface level is essential. We should love the Words of Torah exactly as they appear to us, and do so because they are HIS Words, and we love Him. We should embrace it, because it is a precious gift from our Divine Bridegroom. We should surrender to it, as we surrender to every facet of His Will for our lives. We should adjust our lives to it. But we should never stop there.

His Words of life instruction are so much deeper and mean so *much more* than the fallen human mind can grasp at the surface or ‘natural eye’ level². And it is in the realm of the ‘much more’ that Torah takes on the characteristic of *life*. As Yeshua taught, **do not kill** definitely means do not kill. But it also means *much more* – it pierces and penetrates beyond physical deeds, to thoughts, and emotions, and attitudes, and words. It penetrates to the “*threshold of pain*”. Each *mitzvah*, you see, is the *eye of a needle*. We have to *decrease* - and become really ‘*small*’ – to pass through.

Each Mitzvah of Torah is a Gateway Into the Kingdom of Messiah

Chapter 22 of *Devarim* [Deuteronomy] contains many miscellaneous *mitzvot* [life instructions] the Holy One has prophesied that those who are His people will perform *when/as you go* Remember, each *mitzvah* set forth in Torah is designed to function as a “*gateway into the kingdom of Messiah*”. That does not mean that performing the *mitzvah* will earn a person “salvation”. It was never intended to be so. Earning salvation is not only *impossible* but *totally unnecessary*. Every new creation in Him has, after all, been *given* righteous standing as a free gift. The Bridegroom’s path of *mitzvot* merely leads us into the fullness of Messiah’s kingdom, the way the Sea of Reeds constituted a gateway to our Covenant Partner in Heaven’s Sinaitic Chuppah. Our calling is to follow Messiah into and through each *mitzvah*-gateway the way Israel followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the Sea of Reeds.

But *wait*, you may say: *What on earth do the mitzvot of Torah – i.e. instructions from Heaven regarding everything from the clothing and accessories we choose to wear to the substances we choose to eat, and how we react as a community to all kinds of selfish and destructive behaviors - have to do with Messiah?* Ah Beloved. This is the most wonderful news of all. What Messiah did when he walked the earth was to open – and place the sign of Lamb’s blood on the doorposts of - each *mitzvah*-doorway of Torah. He blazed a trail for us, as His Redeemed Ones, to follow. We are now able to walk through each doorway He opened for us, one by one, prayerfully appropriating for ourselves the Lamb’s-blood mark as we pass through. His coming did not mean we were now free to run around willy-nilly, dancing in doorways, doing whatever we want, like unescorted children on the loose in a candy store. Nor are we any longer to stumble in and out of the doorways *on our own*, like bull elephants in a china shop. We now get to cling to

² Hence Yeshua’s teaching clearly declared that while surface level of the **Lo Tirtzach** declaration of Sinai says only “You will not tear asunder [i.e. usually interpreted ‘kill’] the Divine life principle meant more than appeared on the surface. Indeed, Yeshua taught the Divine declaration **lo tinaf** cut much deeper – to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, whether or not evidenced by negative speech. See **Matthew 5:21-26**. A similar example was provided by Messiah regarding the **Lo Tinaf** declaration of Sinai [You will not adulterate]. See **Matthew 5:27-32**.

our Bridegroom's side and *let Him lead us* through each gateway into which He calls us. We now get to *hold His Hand* all the way, and talk to Him – and learn to move only in response to His direction, like a *Bride* learns to move in response to the lead of her bridegroom.

Each mitzvah, mishpat, and chuk of Torah is a link of Messiah's 'easy yoke' and 'light burden'. See **Matthew 11:29-30**. By allowing yourself to be brought into the yoke of Messiah, you deny yourself, and take up His Cross daily, and follow Him. When you are yoked with someone stronger than you, the result is that you do not do anything solely in your own strength. You just have to stop resisting and cooperate. Where the person with whom you are yoked goes, you go. At whatever pace and in whatever direction the person with whom you are yoked moves, you move. You '*abide*' in the One with whom you share the yoke. Don't fight it; embrace it. Enjoy the closeness to the Master. Enjoy the opportunity to learn to think the way He thinks and feel the emotions He feels, and adjust your schedule and priorities to His. Enjoy the greatest, most fulfilling journey a human being can take. When you are in the yoke with Messiah, even angels are envious – for that is a level of intimacy with Him they can never know.

Finding Our Place in the Cleft of the Rock

And now, if you will, let us look even deeper into the gateway image – and through focusing on that image, as Moshe prayed, may the Holy One both *teach us His ways* and *show us His glory*. If you will receive it, the Holy One has designed each *mitzvah* of Torah as *a place at which one can see the Holy One's "back"* - as Moshe did when the Holy One hid him in the cleft of the rock, and passed by Him, proclaiming His essence.

What does it mean to see the Holy One's 'back'? The Holy One told Moshe in advance, describing what He was going to do was to '*cause all My goodness to pass before you*'. **Exodus 33:19**.

Do you not realize that every single *mitzvah* of Torah reveals something – some unique aspect – of our Covenant Partner in Heaven's *goodness*? Each *mitzvah* is an *atrium* into which the glory of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov shines, bringing revitalizing light into the life of anyone who will enter into it, and promising a taste of the sweetness of life in the *Gan Eden*, before the Fall. The word *mitzvah*, you see, usually mistranslated into English as 'commandment', is actually a form of the Hebrew verb *tzavah*³ – meaning '*to connect*' or '*to attach*'. A *mitzvah* is a God-ordained way to connect, or attach

³ *Tzavah* is *tzade, vav, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #6680. Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon interprets the *qal* form of this verb, which is not used in Scripture, to mean '*he sets up*'.

ourselves, to Messiah. The idea is not to “perform” a *mitzvah* in the sense of accomplishing a task for a taskmaster – the idea is to interact with our Wonderful Covenant Partner in the beautiful atrium the *mitzvah* provides for us, and thereby to get to know Him - and His plan for our lives - more intimately. Each *mitzvah* of Torah is therefore a separate aspect of our destiny as a Bride. The more *mitzvot*⁴ we walk through with Messiah the closer we come to Bridal maturity. That doesn’t make us any more righteous, or any more loved. It just brings us closer to fulfillment of our purpose and our destiny. It is simply one more step in the preparation for our wedding.

Beware the “To-do” List Mentality

Torah is not intended as a “checklist” of do’s and don’ts. Nor is it a ‘to-do’ list of chores to complete. If you ever find yourself patting yourself on the back that you have “fulfilled” a *mitzvah* of Torah, or condemning yourself (or anyone else) because you haven’t “fulfilled” a *mitzvah*, you have *exited* the Way of life and are, like Adam and Chava, partaking of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge.

Torah is instead a beautiful *dance of love*. We relax in our Covenant Partner’s loving embrace, and *lay our head on His Breast*. At that point, the music begins to play, and the dance begins. The Holy One leads; we merely follow His movements. He is the *Stronger partner* in the relationship. He is the *teacher*; we always remain the *pupil*. Each *mitzvah* of Torah is another step of the Divine dance. Some of the steps in which He leads us [i.e. some of the *mitzvot* of Torah] seem clumsy and uncomfortable to us at first. We learn by staying close to Him, and responding to what we see and sense Him doing. We learn best by *doing*, in response to Him, not by merely studying or watching others.

Just remember, Torah is not about “earning salvation”; it is about developing increasingly *intimate relationship and communion with Him in real time*. It is about embracing His lifestyle – and buying in to our Divine purpose as the chosen *help meet* of the Creator of the Universe. As we learn the steps of Torah’s dance of love better over the years we become more and more responsive to the leading of our Divine Partner. We gradually become a fitting partner for Him in the Divine dance. But in the meantime each and every time we engage with Him in this dance He shows us something new about each step in which He leads us.

We thereby learn that we will never “fulfill” any *mitzvah* of Torah – that is not the point. Each *mitzvah* is designed to be infinite, as the Holy One is infinite. Each *mitzvah* of Torah, you see, has both a *surface level* for the beginner, and a series of

⁴ *Mitzvot* is the plural form of the Hebrew word *mitzvah*. Note that it is in the feminine plural form – signifying that *mitzvot* are to be a *Bridal response* to our Bridegroom. They are not a masculine pathway we are to initiate and perform by hard labor to earn our Mate’s affection or hand.

ever deepening *subsurface levels* which we can explore the rest of our lives and never exhaust.

Each *mitzvah* is designed to create more hunger, more desire, to be who the Holy One created you to be. Each is designed to make you whisper, as it calls you into its essence: *‘If Your Presence does not go with me, do not send me up from here.’* Each is designed to cause our heart and spirit to cry out, as did Moshe *“Teach me your ways!”*

What a new creation in Messiah is designed to do, as he or she encounters and deals with a *mitzvah* of Torah, is to use that *mitzvah* as a “stage”, of sorts, on which to interact with our Covenant Partner in Heaven. Through each such interaction, a new creation is able to gain greater understanding of and love for the Holy One, to deepen the intimacy level, and to indeed become more like the Messiah. Now, let’s prepare to *dance!*

Dealing With Mitzvot Concerning Other People’s ‘Property Interests’

One of the first subjects covered by Moshe in *Ki Tetze* is *how we are to relate to other people’s property interests*. *This bulletin just in:* The material world was not created for your indulgence – or mine. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven has a long-range plan for the good of Creation. Part of His redemptive plan for Creation is to entrust material possessions to the human beings He wills to have them, for Divine purposes that we may or may not understand or appreciate. That means He entrusts some things to us – but most things He entrusts to others. In this world, we will encounter a lot more property that is NOT entrusted to us than is. Can we deal with that? Can we be at peace with the fact that our neighbor may have more – perhaps much, much more - than we do? Can we accept that it is GOOD for Creation that everything in this world is not ours? Can we understand that jealousy and envy are not just personal weaknesses, but constitute rebellion against the Holy One’s sovereignty, and His right to determine who should have what? Can we be at peace with the fact that part of our purpose on earth as His Redeemed Community is to work with our Covenant Partner in preserving the distribution of assets/material possessions He has decreed?

Hypothetical #1: When things – or People – Wander From The Place They Belong Onto Pathways That Bring Them To Us

The Creator’s Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and for the Restoration of Creation involves our active engagement in recognizing, seeking, going after, and taking responsibility for that which is lost – even if it is never going to be ‘ours’. Layers of Responsibility – individual and communal - are assigned. We

don't have to do it all. But when the Holy One brings the 'stray' squarely into our path, we have to decide if we are IN THE COVENANT, and will do what Messiah would do - or if we are going to pretend we are too busy, say '*not my circus, not my monkeys!*', and let the stray fend for itself. Here is the first hypothetical Moshe tosses our way on the subject of '*Strays, Lost and Found, and People of the Covenant*':

Lo-tir'eh et-shor achicha o et-seyo nidachim

If you see your brother's ox or sheep going astray, you must not hide yourself.

V'hit'alamta mehem hashev teshivem l'achicha

You are to return them to your brother⁵.

V'im-lo karov achicha eleicha v'lo yedato

If your brother is not near you, or if you do not know who [the owner is],

va'asafto el-toch beiteicha

you are to bring [the animal] home

v'hayah imeicha ad derosh achicha oto

and keep it until your brother identifies it,

v'hashevoto lo

whereupon you are to return it to him.

And lest we think that this *mitzvah* only applies to livestock Moshe adds:

V'chen ta'aseh lachamoro v'chen ta'aseh lesimlato

You are to do the same to a donkey, an article of clothing,

v'chen ta'aseh l'chol-avedat achicha asher-tovad mimeinu

or anything else that your brother loses and you find.

umetzatah lo tuchal l'hit'alem

You are not to hide yourself from it.

[Deuteronomy 22:1-3]

There is no 'finder's keeper's' rule in our Covenant Partner's kingdom. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven expects us to work *with Him* in His plan for distribution of material goods, not *against Him*. The fact that things get mislaid, lost, or left – even through negligence or inattention – is not a 'sign' that the Holy One's plan for distribution has changed, and that we are somehow chosen as the new intended possessor.

Dealing according to Torah with other people's property interests is not just being a 'good neighbor' – it is partnering with the Holy One in the distribution of the material assets of the world to whom He wills.

⁵ This is an expansion of the *mish'pat* of Exodus 23:4, where the Holy One told Moshe: ***Ki tifga shor oyvecha o chamoro to'eh hashev teshivenu lo*** - If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, bring it back to him.

You Are Not to Hide Yourself

What does Moshe mean when he says: *lo tuchal l'hit'alem* - i.e. *You are not to hide yourself from it* [i.e. the lost, strayed or mislaid item]? Well, do you remember the first persons who tried to hide themselves? It was Adam and Chava in the Garden. They had just eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and suddenly “*the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*”

Genesis 3:7. When the Holy One came to spend time in intimate fellowship with them at the appointed time of breathing Torah tells us “*Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Holy One God among the trees of the garden*” Genesis 3:8. They covered as best they could cover, and hid as best they could hide. They put as many obstacles as possible between them and the Holy One in an effort to establish and maintain their own private, independent ‘space’ in which they could do what they wanted to without outside interference. What they thought they were doing was establishing freedom to be who they wanted to be and to do what they wanted to do; but what they were really doing was entering into a codependent relationship with the Serpent. They were embracing a state of bondage in which they would have to listen to whatever the Serpent spoke to them and would have to do whatever the Serpent told them to do.

Every time we hide ourselves from the world or the people around us, every time we seclude ourselves, every time we cover ourselves with fig leaves and choose for ourselves and step behind walls of separation, we do exactly the same thing Adam and Chava did. We think we are establishing our independence; but what we are really doing is *responding to fear*. We think we are protecting our freedom; but in doing so we are surrendering to the way of the Serpent, and forfeiting our chance to be who we were created to be. We are *knocking own lights out*. Moshe is therefore making in clear in Torah that it is not an option for us to just go along our merry way, and leave our brother’s property where we see it. We are to get *actively involved* in returning it. We are to protect and secure it from loss. We really are our brother’s keeper – and that is not all: we are also watchmen over our brother’s property interests.

Hypothetical #2: The Fleshly Impulses That Flow From Unsundered Sexuality

More than one-half of the verses in today’s study (i.e. verses 13-30) deal with marriage and/or human sexuality. The Holy One obviously considers those subjects to be very important. Our society does as well, but for totally different reasons, and with totally different emphases. The Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society we are called to build and model to the world must understand very well

the corrupting power of the narcissistic sexual urge, and know that accepting it as ‘normative’ and allowing it to infect our society and damage our most vulnerable citizens is simply not an option.

The series of hypotheticals in which Moshe tries to make us deal with the volatile ‘*yetzer hara*’ triggers inherent in human sexuality begins as follows:

Lo-yiheveh k’li-gever al-ishah

A woman is not to take on herself a thing pertaining to a man,

v’lo-yilbash gevev simlat ishah

and a man is not to take on himself a thing pertaining to a woman,

ki toavat Adonai Eloheicha kol-oseh eleh

for whoever does these things are an abomination to the Holy One your God.

[Deuteronomy 22:5]

Some translations of this verse interpret the word *K’li* as ‘clothing’. This tends to suggest that the focus of the verse is what garments one wears. But while the *k’li* includes clothing, *K’li* can mean anything tangible - any object, any article, any vessel, any implement, any utensil, any weapon, any garment, any hairstyle – in short anything. There is, it appears, in the Redeemed Community, to be a very clear delineation between men and women – a distinction in appearance, in function, and in approach to life. Men are created to be ‘male’ for a reason. The world needs our masculinity – it is an essential aspect of our Covenant Partner’s redemptive plan. Likewise, women are created to be ‘female’ for a reason. Femininity is also an essential aspect of the Holy One’s redemptive plan. With the calling of the Holy One comes a Divine empowerment to walk out the ‘maleness’ or ‘femaleness’ into which one was born. What the Creator has established as separate and distinct aspects of humanity are not to be mixed, mingled, confused, and diluted. It is so with seeds. It is so with animals. It is so with mankind.

Many nations and cultures – including the American and European cultures of today – not only *countenance* but actively and aggressively *promote* gender confusion. But Moshe, the friend of the Bridegroom, wants us to know that gender confusion is an ‘abomination’ – detestable, intolerable – to our Covenant Partner in Heaven. In the Redeemed Community, you see, men have a distinct call to ‘maleness’, and are not supposed to look like, dress up like, or behave like women, or become ‘intimate’ with men the way a woman is intended to for procreation. And in the Redeemed Community, women have a distinct call to ‘femaleness’, and are not supposed to look like, dress up like, or behave like, men, or become ‘intimate’ with women the way a man is intended to for procreation.

Male and Female Created He Them

The first direct mention of human sexuality is found very early in Torah, in

Genesis 1:27. In that verse it is recorded that:

*The Holy One created man [Hebrew **adam**] in His own image,
in the image of the Holy One He created him;
male [Hebrew **zakar**] and female [Hebrew **nekebah**] He created them.*

This is explained more fully in Genesis 2:18, wherein the Holy One says:

It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

In Genesis 2:22 we are told the procedure the Holy One chose to employ to introduce femininity into His Creation:

*The Holy One made a woman [Hebrew, **ishah**]
from the rib [Hebrew, **tzela**] He had taken out of the man [Hebrew, **adam**]
and He brought her to the man.*

Finally, in Genesis 2:23-24 we read of the Holy One's purpose and intent regarding the sexuality He created.

*The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.
She will be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother,
and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh."*

The Holy One could have created man without woman, or woman without man. He is not a slave to the laws of nature - He thought up each of those "laws" and established them, when He established nature itself. But our Covenant Partner in Heaven had a *specific purpose* in mind. Note that the first mention of sexuality is in the context of the statement that the Holy One created man "*in His own image*". The shocking statement that mankind was created "*in His own image*" - "*in the image of the Holy One*" is explained by only one criterion - **male and female he created them**. Consider the possibility that there is something about "maleness" alone which cannot accurately reflect the Holy One's image. Likewise, consider that there is something in "femaleness" that is inadequate in itself to accurately portray the Holy One's glory. Just as the Holy One has two equally forceful, but seemingly opposite, characteristics - judgment and mercy, so mankind has two equally forceful, but seemingly opposite, natures - male and female.

We have previously discussed that the Holy One's people do not - or should not - submit to the Torah in hopes of winning the Holy One's approval or "earning" salvation. The Torah was always intended to be *a matter of love*. Out of a heart overflowing with love for our Covenant Partner in Heaven (all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, remember?), the Redeemed of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov gladly embrace the lifestyle of holiness He calls them to. Why? To model *His holiness* and *His goodness* to the world - to be *a light to the nations*.

*Is there any area in life more in need of a model of the Holy One's holiness and goodness than in the area of human sexuality? Our world is amuck with perversion and misinformation and gender confusion. It is the result of Serpent-speak. But our Covenant Partner in Heaven has called His people to a *different way* - a way that reflects *His glory* and *His goodness* to the world.*

According to Torah the female is *not a slave of a man or a tool for man's pleasure* – she is *actually a part of man*, taken from him, and without which he is not complete. Similarly, according to Torah the female is *not a ruler over man*, but a “*helper suitable*” for him.

Our Covenant Partner in Heaven calls to us not to think of sexuality like the world does even for an instant. We are not to approach or express our sexuality according to the world's standards. The world hides its sexuality behind masks, you see. It uses others for pleasure – or to gain a sense of conquest. The world confuses sexual appetites with issues of identity and destiny. The world reduces sexuality to an animalistic function – making it the exclusive realm of the Serpent. Our Bridegroom-King calls us not only to act differently, but even to *think* differently – and therefore to react/respond to trespass, temptation, and insult differently.

The Holy One He has a wise, glorious, and Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented plan for sexuality. And He also has such a high-level plan for every single potential romantic partner you will ever see or meet. Honor that plan. The Bridegroom-King wants us to understand, teach, and demonstrate to the world through honoring interactions with each gender that no human being is an object to use for our pleasure. He wants us to realize that other people's emotions are not toys to play with; that their body parts are not vistas to explore; and that the physical pleasure receptors He has designed into them are not joysticks to enhance our self-esteem. We have access to all the revelation, Divine Guidance, and *Ruach*-empowerment necessary for us to show the world how to ‘*do life – including sexuality - right*’. It is not a matter of self-control; it is a matter of worshipping the King in Spirit and in Truth. It is not a matter of sacrifice; it is a matter of choosing a superior, far more glorious, realm of pleasure. Sexual purity is a key component of becoming who you have been created to be and functioning effectively and joyfully in the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society He is bringing forth to walk the earth at such a time as this. As an Ambassador of the Kingdom of Heaven, arise, and shine! Do not hide yourself.

Recognizing and Renouncing Cultural Phenomena That Perpetuate Gender Confusion

Beware of songs, books, television shows, movies, media propagandists, entertainers, and the subtle messages each give about how men and women, boys and girls, are to think about themselves and relate to each other. Beware the “prom night”, “debutante” and “dating” syndromes - and all other sexuality-charged “rites of passage” the world says are important. Such cultural phenomena emphasize the *exact opposite viewpoint* from the Covenant lifestyle to which we are called. Do not accept them just because they are entrenched in our culture and started as seemingly “harmless fun” or sociological experiments.

The Holy One created you, and He alone - in His prescribed way - can bring you fulfillment in any regard, including the realm of sexuality. Do not let the world, or the culture, or the flesh of your hormones, lie to you in this regard. You have an eternal *covenant of shalom* with the Creator of not only your body, but also your will, your mind, your emotions, and your soul. He has a wise, glorious, and Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented plan for you and for every aspect of your persona - including your sexuality. And keep in mind that just as the Bridegroom-King has such a beautiful salt-, light-, and witness- quality plan for you, He also has such a high-level plan for every single potential romantic partner you will ever see or meet. Honor that plan. Do it for the sake of your own *shalom*. Do it for the sake of your spouse or intended spouse. Do it for the sake of all those you will meet along your journey who live under the spell of the adversary and hence have no understanding of, much less appreciation for, the glorious salt, light and witness plan the Holy One has designed for them.

Remember that while you are a special treasure to the Holy One, you are not by any means the center of the universe. Your fleshly, sensual pleasure is not the reason the world was brought into existence. Moreover, every single human being, whatever his/her gender, age, ethnic background, nationality, or mindset, is also a beloved Creation of the Bridegroom-King. He is therefore constantly pursuing the heart of every human being you will ever see or meet, and is also zealously watching over that person’s body and mind. The Bridegroom-King wants people who walk in Covenant with Him to model His Ways. As Betrothed Covenant Partners of the Holy One we have the precious gift of access to the Source of true love, of true joy, of true pleasure, and of true wisdom. We have access to all the revelation, Divine Guidance, and *Ruach*-empowerment necessary for us to show the world how to ‘*do sexuality right*’. We do not have to live at the whim of constantly changing worldly values and concepts of ‘morality’. We do not have to walk blindly into the death traps the adversary and your flesh conspire to set for us by manipulating our appetite for sensuality and

our capacity for sexuality. We are equipped overcome – and help others overcome – all the cultural lies that have led today’s society to devalue and pervert the Holy One’s beautiful idea of marriage. Are you up for it? It is not a matter of mere abstinence; it is a matter of purity. It is not a matter of self-control; it is a matter of worshipping the King in Spirit and in Truth. It is not a matter of sacrifice; it is a matter of choosing a superior, far more glorious, realm of pleasure.

Whatever your age, whatever your gender, and whatever your past experience, receive the challenge of the Torah to consider your future sexual purity – in every realm from action, to speech, to thought – to be just another opportunity to bring the Bridegroom-King the honor He deserves. Sexual purity – from this day forward - is a key component of becoming who you have been created to be and functioning effectively and joyfully in the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society He is bringing forth to walk the earth at such a time as this.

You are an Ambassador of the Kingdom of Heaven. Arise, and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Holy One has arisen upon you. Do not hide yourself.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Today’s aliyah contains many *mitzvot*.

[A] Make a list of each specific *mitzvah* contained in this chapter;

[B] Now, organize the *mitzvah* 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 our Covenant Partner in Heaven is sending in regard to each of the five broad categories mentioned in subpart [b] – focus on what you think each *mitzvah* in this passage is intended to reveal about *our Covenant Partner’s character and nature*, about *what He considers valuable*, and about *what His priorities are*.

2. More than one-half of the verses in today’s study (verses 13-30) deal with marriage and/or human sexuality. The Divine Bridegroom of Sinai obviously considers that subject to be very important.

[A] What do you feel to be the proper, Godly means for men and women to find life-mates?

[B] Why do you think the Holy One considers the sexual relationship between men and women to be so important? [If you are over 13 years of age, your

answer should be at least a page in length, and should include *what you think our Divine Bridegroom's will concerning your sexuality is and why you think that is His will for you*].

3. This week's Haftarah is the fifth Haftarah of consolation. Again the prophet *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] speaks to us of a glorious unfolding revelation of the Holy One's plan to restore His people. In the 54th chapter division of the scroll of *Yeshayahu* the remnant of Israel which has made *teshuvah* after the Babylonian captivity, and returned from exile, is told:

***Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations;
don't spare: lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.
For you will spread abroad on the right hand and on the left;
and your seed will possess the nations and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.***

[A] Why does the Holy One tell the "barren woman" she needs to 'enlarge the place of her tent'?

[B] In your life, how do you think the Holy One wants you to 'enlarge the place of your tent'?

4. In this week's reading from the apostolic writings of Yeshua's talmidim Shaul of Tarsus attempts to deal with a group of people who were unfamiliar with Torah [and its description of what our Covenant Partner in Heaven regards as *righteousness in areas of marriage and human sexuality*] and therefore could not correctly understand and apply to their lives the work of Yeshua - the fullness of Torah. The Hebrews and gentiles of Corinth who had passed through the entrance to the Kingdom when they accepted Yeshua as sin-cleanser had not learned to approach each Torah-*mitzvah* as a gateway to the Kingdom of Messiah. They were striving, instead, in a different direction, trying to *establish a religious institution* where they could meet and do religious "stuff". They were playing *religious parlor games*. They were mistaking freedom from the burden of self-determination for freedom from their Bridegroom-King's Ways as outlined in Torah.

Shaul will deal with that quite poignantly in chapters 12-14. In chapter 5 however Shaul is dealing with the fact that, perhaps in a desire to build a religious institution for Christians that will rival the pagan temples in size, the Corinthians are too willing to cheer on people engaged in flagrant rebellion against the Torah of the Most High God. In today's B'rit Chadasha we read:

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you,
and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Goyim,
that one has his father's wife.
You are puffed up, and didn't rather mourn,
that he who had done this deed might be removed from among you.*

The Corinthians – some fresh out of paganism, others fresh out of a religious system collapsing under the weight of man-made traditions - do not know how to follow Messiah’s lead in application of Torah’s provisions concerning the way to deal with the *ra* that causes a man to “discover his father’s skirt” – *i.e.* to take to himself a woman who was once his father’s wife. See **Deuteronomy 22:30**.

Shaul chastises the Corinthian talmidim for not having yet learned how this important element of Divine Life Instruction [*i.e.* Torah] was forever bound up with the identity and mission of Messiah.

[A] What emotional response does Shaul say believers in Corinth, if in touch with Yeshua and with Torah, would have had to the man who “uncovered his father’s skirt”?

[B] Look up in Strong’s concordance the Greek word translated “*mourn(ed)*” in verse 2. Write the Greek word and its definition. What emotional effect should a *ra* like this [or any full-grown *ra*] have on you? Does Psalm 119:113, 136, or 158 help?

[C] Shaul accused the young believers in Corinth of being “*proud*” [KJV “*puffed up*”] that the man who was presently engaged in this violation of Torah was a part of their small group. Explain how you think this could have been a source of religious pride in these people.

[D] Can you think of a situation [or perhaps two], long before the revelation of Mount Sinai, when the “uncovering of a father’s skirt”, in a slightly different context, resulted in a curse? [Hint: look up Ham and Reuben]. In each of those cases, what was the curse?

*May you relax in the loving embrace of the Divine Bridegroom,
and lean your head on His Breast; And each time the music of Heaven begins to play,
may you dance with Him the Divine dance.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Psalm 27:3

*Though a host should encamp against me, my heart will not fear.
Though war⁶ rise against me, even then I will be confident.*

⁶ The word our English Bibles translate as “war” in this verse is *milchamah*, Strong’s Hebrew word #4421, pronounced *mil-khaw-maw*’. It is derived from the Hebrew verb root *lacham*, [lamed, chet, mem sofit], Strong’s Hebrew word # 3898, pronounced *law-kham*’.