

Introduction to Parsha Ki Tavo¹

<i>Torah Ki Tavo:</i>	Deuteronomy 26:1 - 29:8
<i>Haftarah:</i>	Isaiah 60:1-22
<i>B'rit Chadasha:</i>	Luke 21:1-6



Put it in a basket, and go.

[Deuteronomy 26:2]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 4th Petition: *Ge'ulah* [Kinsman Redemption]

***Vehayah ki-tavo el-ha-aretz* – And when you have come into the land ... *asher Adonai Eloheicha noten lecha nachalah* – that the Holy One your God has assigned to you in stewardship Deuteronomy 26:1a.**

Look around you, Beloved. The final ingathering of the *Creation year*² is imminent. All over the world, people of every nation, ethnicity, tribe, and tongue are preparing to reap a harvest. In Israel and the rest of the Northern Hemisphere it is the trees and vines that are laden with fruit. In the lands lying south of the equator early species of grain are heading out, causing farmers to sharpen their scythes. This is the great annual ‘sowing and reaping, tending and keeping’ accounting. Whatever men may have planted, watered, tended, and kept in their vineyard, orchard, grove, pasture, field, and *life-garden*³ this year is about to be revealed. Whatever we have sown we will soon reap. The king is in the field – and whatever is flourishing and ripening for harvest – be it herb or briar, wheat or tare,

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² The *Creation year* is the one-year agricultural cycle that begins on the anniversary of the Creation of Adam - *i.e.* 1 Tishri. This is in contradistinction to the *Biblical Year of B'nei Yisrael*, which according to Torah begins with the new moon of Nisan/Aviv – *i.e.* the moon cycle in which the First Exodus occurred.

³ Each of us has what I like to call a *life-garden* – *i.e.* a matrix of overlapping spiritual, intellectual, informational, educational, emotional, relational, economic, ideological, dietary, fashion, health/wellness, and sensory stimulation ecosystems in which we choose to live our lives.

wild or tame, of the tree of life or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - is about to be exposed.

All In!

Welcome to the 50th week of the annual Torah cycle – the week we study the parsha known as *Ki Tavo*. This is the parsha in which Moshe calls forth a *people whose hearts are set on pilgrimage*. The Holy One wants a people whose lives have been transformed by walking with Him over a series of sowing and reaping seasons - a people whose interactions with the world exude Kingdom-of-Heaven-scented *humility, gratitude, shalom, mature discipline, and joy*. Moshe's words are designed to empower our hearts to feel, to encourage our minds to think, and to prepare our tongues to say *tender words of thanksgiving* and *passionate words of re-dedication*. Moshe knows that locked up deep within us, awaiting a great prophetic return to the land, are emotions and declarations that every redeemed soul desperately needs to express - and vocabulary birthed in Heaven that our Glorious Bridegroom-King delights to hear. When we enter our King's Courts – when we appear before Him and present ourselves and our *korbanot* before His Throne – what shall we say? What words – in what language – shall we employ? What phrases shall we utter? Moshe knows King's Chambers protocol – and he wants us to know as well.

Moshe's Ki Tavo Download – Broken Down Into 5 Daily Messages

Day 1: Deuteronomy 26:1 – 15 – If the First Fruits Are Holy... .

Day 2: Deuteronomy 26:16 – 27:8 – As for Me and My House ...

Day 3: Deuteronomy 27:9 – 26 – Go, Tell it On the Mountain ...

Day 4: Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – All Aboard the B'racha Train!

Day 5: Deuteronomy 28:15- 29:8 – What is it like on the 'dark side'?

Behold! A People Whose Hearts Are Set On Pilgrimage Is Arising!

Ki Tavo offers a primer on how to return to the Avrahamic model of [a] *sh'ma* response to the Holy One and [b] full, intended levels of concern for, kindness to, and Kingdom-promoting impact upon both *mankind as a species* and *Creation as an ecosystem*. Even as Avraham was called to use the fruitfulness of the land of Israel in an unselfish way – one that would lead to the blessing of every family and nation on the face of the earth; so it is to be with us. We are not to consider the land we are being given as ours to do with as we wish. Each tract was created to play an essential part to play in the Divine Beachhead Plan. We are not authorized to consume the land's resources however we see fit, or use any of it for our own

selfish purposes and agendas. We are instead being appointed as stewards of the land – to cleanse our assigned portion of it of the bloodguilt, idolatry, sexual perversion, social, economic, and racial oppression, hate, and self-destructive folly to which the Kena’ani have subjected it. We are to plant it with pure, incorruptible seed, then water and nurture that seed to maturity, resulting in supernaturally bountiful harvests. We are called to co-labor with this amazing land to, *inspire, feed, and bless* the nations.

Ki Tavo speaks exclusively in the *future tense*. Its focus is on what we are to do *when we take over the stewardship responsibilities regarding the land*. Its message of consecration is intended for all persons of any generation who will ever enter the Glorious Land not as *tourists* but as *passionate pilgrims, faithful stewards, and humble servants*. Its *mitzvot* are all about deepening the eternal connection of the sons and daughters of Avraham with both [a] the Land of Avraham and [b] the *Sh’ma-Lifestyle* of Avraham.

If you are making a pilgrimage to *Eretz Yisrael* any time soon I encourage you to read and meditate on this parsha – and its soul-stirring ‘when you come into the land’ liturgies – well prior to actually setting out on your journey. This is the ‘*Parsha of the Passionate Pilgrims With Penitent Prodigals in Tow*’.

The Meaning/Significance of the Name ‘Ki Tavo’

The parsha is named for its opening phrase, which reads as follows:

V’hayah ki tavo el-ha-aretz

And it will happen, when/as you come to the land

asher Adonai Eloheicha noten lecha nachalah

that the Eternal One your God is assigning you in stewardship ...

[Deuteronomy 26:1(a)]

Ki Tavo is usually translated ‘*when you come in* or *when you enter*. The operative verb is the Hebrew verb *bo* [*beit, vav, alef*] - which means to *make a transition/travel/move from one place to another*. The first usage of the verb *bo* in Torah is found in Genesis 2:19, where the Holy One is said to have made every beast of the earth and every fowl of the air *bo* [i.e. *come/go/travel/transition*] before Adam so he could ‘name’ them/declare their purpose and essence. The focus of the verb is not on the *direction* or the *velocity* of movement but on *the emotional and spiritual result of the movement* – i.e. *the actual impact upon the one[s] doing the transitioning and the world that will result from the movement*. Covenant life is never stuck in a rut. We are always *in motion* – *leaving things behind, moving into new phases*. The mode of life to which we have been called is all *about growth, maturation, transition, transcending, and overcoming*.

Moshe illustrates this *transition/transcendence calling* in very practical ways. He himself will transition from his second speech on the plain into his third one. He will also transition from a meaty discussion of *the nuances of the Narrow Road we are on* to a blueprint of how we are to *physically establish our presence in and stake our claim to the Promised Land*. But it is even more than that. Something is happening in us *spiritually and emotionally* that goes far beyond these physical movements.

We will find that we are not merely, as we appear to the world to be, *poised on the brink of* a new [to us] parcel of geography, a new [to us] level of spiritual life, a new [to us] kind of responsibility to our Covenant Partner. We are being *drawn forward - propelled toward our destiny and purpose* by the prophetic, creative force of our Divine Bridegroom's words. The Holy One is the magnet; we are the steel; and His Words form the passageway that connects the twain.

The physical tents of our ancestors may still be encamped on the plains of Moav - and ours may be toiling away at mundane tasks in the cities and villages of our exile - but because of where we are in our Torah studies *our spirits are hearing and responding to our Bridegroom-King's prophetic directive TAVO!* If we have ears to *sh'ma* the message we are hearing is to lay aside our emotional/spiritual comfort zones and *Get Moving!* It is time to launch out upon a great pilgrimage. It is time to go up to the Mountain of the Holy One. It is past time for talking about it - it is time to engage our feet instead of our mouths. We have sat before this mountain quite long enough.

The purpose of *Ki Tavo* is to give us specific instructions as to how we are to *keep our focus our King's Torah and Redemptive, Restorative Purposes* in the midst of the excitement, trauma, and danger of the move we are about to make - and in the face of the challenges we are about to experience.

What Are 'Devarim' and What Does They Have to Do With Our Destiny?

To many the word 'liturgy' is a 'dirty word'. Anything liturgical is considered 'bad', old-fashioned, and unspiritual. To such people spontaneity is not only the *spice of life* but should consist of the *whole of life*. They believe that being led by the Spirit means that everyone should just 'do whatever feels right' to them at the moment. That is their definition of 'freedom'⁴. This week the Eternal One's Torah

⁴ Alas, freedom is often interpreted by such people as a license to spit bile all over other people - especially over anyone who dares consider the Torah to actually be what the Holy One has said it was - the Bridegroom of Heaven's loving instructions to His Bride-to-be as to how to dress herself in fine linen and make herself ready for the wedding.

is going to strike a blow against total reliance upon that kind of *spontaneity*. Moshe is going to share with us with a series of *devarim* – i.e. *Divinely inspired and energizing words* - that will look, to the uninitiated reader, a lot like liturgies. And Torah is going to tell us that these very powerful *devarim* that Moshe is going to teach us to say are Divinely designed to constitute integral parts of our destiny, our purpose in life, and our testimony as the Holy One's kingdom of priests and holy nation. Why? What exactly are these *devarim*? And what could they possibly have to do with our involvement in the Holy One's Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration?

The specific *devarim* Moshe is going to teach us – like the *sh'ma* and *v'havta* scripts he has previously downloaded – are integral components of the testimony we are called to give. These recitations call upon us to release pre-scripted *devarim* into the atmosphere at strategic times. They provide a narrow-road passageway to assist and process our people through major life events – betrothal and marriage, Shabbat and Moedim, childbirth and *brit milah*, aging, dying, tragedy and bereavement. Divinely inspired *devarim* recitations give vocabulary and choreography to our times of joy, gladness, and celebration. The recitation of these phrases help us approach any number of potentially ecstatic, exhilarating, frightening, or traumatic experiences. Torah's scripted *Devarim* recitations calm and comfort us in challenging times. They help us focus on priorities and put things in context. They help us not feel so alone and powerless. Through the Divinely Ordained *Devarim* recitations Moshe teaches us we connect not only with the Divine Author of the Life Situation we are facing, but also with every patriarch or fellow Hebrew who ever participated - or will ever participate - in it.

These recitations connect our national past with our personal present and our collective future. They connect seedtime with harvest, pain with recovery, and personal joy with community responsibility. They bind us tighter than ever to our God – and establish a universally accessible 'home base' or point-of-connection between us and family members, co-laborers, and fellow pilgrims. They interlink us with both preceding and successive generations of our great Covenant nation.

Embrace the Divinely Scripted *devarim recitals* of *Ki Tavo*, Dear One. They are *good and perfect gifts from Your Divine Bridegroom*.

A New and Brighter Day

The opening chapter of the parsha contains a startling '*sh'ma Yisrael*' announcement. We have already learned to pay close attention to announcements beginning with the phrase '*Sh'ma Yisrael*'. Such introductory language always seems to reveal to us something about our destiny and purpose on earth – and the

substance of the diplomatic mission to which we are called. So let's read this parsha's *Sh'ma Yisrael* announcement together:

Moshe and the Kohanim the Levi'im [Levites] *spoke to all Yisra'el, saying,*
'Keep silence and listen [Hebrew, *sh'ma*], *Yisra'el:*
this day you are become the people of the Holy One your God.
[Deuteronomy 27:9]

Hmmm. *This day* we are going to become the people of the Holy One? What does that mean? What is going to be so special about 'this day'? What is it about 'this day' that makes Moshe, the Kohanim and Levi'im stand and proclaim to a whole generation that it is '*this day*' that we are to truly become the people of the Holy One our God? Were we not '*the people of the Holy One*' before '*this day*'? What has transpired? What is different? What is going on?

What Is It That Makes Us "the People of the Holy One"?

What makes Israel [natural or engrafted] the '*people of the Holy One*'? We find out today that *it is not genetics*. How can I say such a thing? Think about it. The genetics of the people standing before Moshe and the Kohanim on the plains of Moav had been determined long ago. They either were descended physically from Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov - or they were not - long before the '*this day*' of which Moshe, Elazar and the Levi'im were speaking. Yet Torah declares to them "*this day*" - here on the plains of Moav - you *have become the people of the Holy One your God*. One does not therefore become a part of the 'people of the Holy One' by being born a natural descendant of Ya'akov. Genetics is *not* the key. Torah wants us to know. Likewise, what makes Israel [natural or engrafted] the 'people of the Holy One' is not *brit milah* [circumcision]. Scandalous, you say? How can I say such a thing, you ask? Don't you see? Most of the people standing before Moshe and the Kohanim at the time these words were pronounced [i.e. those born in the course of the 38 + years of desert wandering] were uncircumcised - see Joshua 5:5. That is why our ancestors had to be circumcised *en masse* at Gilgal, after we entered the Promised Land.

If circumcision were the dividing factor qualifying us as 'the people of the Holy One', the TaNaKh would have declared, at Joshua 5:9 [after the same people standing before Moshe on the plains of Moav were circumcised] '*this day you are become the people of the Holy One your God*'. But Joshua 5 does not say that - for circumcision is not the defining characteristic of 'the people of the Holy One' according to Torah. Circumcision is a covenant action, of course, and has spiritual significance [see **Joshua 5:9: "Today I have rolled away the reproach/shame of Egypt from you."**], but as Shaul so bluntly told the Galatians⁵ it is NOT what makes one 'Israel'.

⁵ Shaul's teaching in Galatians is usually misinterpreted to mean that circumcision and belief in Yeshua are mutually exclusive - that a believer in Yeshua cannot be circumcised, or He will be cut off from

Hmmm. Well, if being born a “Jew” is not what makes one a part of the “people of the Holy One”, and if circumcision is also not what makes one a part of the “people of the Holy One” – then ... what *does*? What exactly occurred on the ‘this day’ of Deuteronomy 27:9 that qualified the people standing on the plains of Moav – and us – to become ‘the people of the Holy One’? Are you ready? Do you want to know what Torah says? Are you *sure*? The answer to the question “what makes someone a part of ‘the people of the Holy One?’” must be found in whatever happened on the ‘this day’ spoken of in Deuteronomy 27:9. Let us look back at yesterday’s aliyah and see what happened *ha-yom hazeh* [this day]. What did the people standing before Moshe, Elazar, and the Levi'im do *that day* that made this declaration “*this day you have become the people of the Holy One*” appropriate?

Let us therefore look back to the preceding passage of Torah to solve this mystery, and uncover one of the most important truths of the Kingdom. Perhaps you had better sit down. Here is what Torah says happened on ‘this day’:

This day [Hebrew, *ha-yom hazeh*] *the Holy One your God enjoins*⁶ *you to do* [Hebrew *asah*] *these statutes and ordinances: you shall therefore keep* [Hebrew *sh'mar*] *and do* [Hebrew *asah*] *them with all your heart, and with all your soul.*

You have declared the Holy One this day [Hebrew, *ha-yom hazeh*] *to be your God, and that you would walk in his ways, and keep* [Hebrew *sh'mar*] *his statutes, and his mitzvot, and his ordinances and listen* [Hebrew *sh'ma*] *to his Voice.*
[Deuteronomy 26:16-19]

Now that is *radical*. I am sure I will be accused of making this up. Remember that *you read it for yourself*. Please do not blame me if what you just read messes up your theology. As for me, if Torah tells me how my family and I can ‘*become the*

Messiah. Before one accepts this misinterpretation of Shaul however one should keep in mind that *Shaul himself circumcised Timothy. Acts 16:3*. If you accept the ‘mutually exclusive’ theory – that circumcision and Yeshua are mutually exclusive, and that if one receives circumcision, he is ‘cut off’ from Messiah, you must also believe that, by circumcising Timothy, Shaul thereby caused Timothy to be cut off from Messiah. But that is utter nonsense. If Timothy was cut off from Messiah by allowing himself to be circumcised, why did Shaul tell him – long after his circumcision - to ‘*take hold of the eternal life to which you were called*’ [I Timothy 6:12], and to ‘*be strong in the chanan* [grace] *that is in Messiah Yeshua* [II Timothy 2:1], and say to him “*The Holy One be with you in your spirit*” [II Timothy 4:22]?

⁶ The Hebrew verb utilized here is *tzavah*, Strong’s #H6680. English writers commonly translate this verb as ‘command’. A better translation would seem to be ‘enjoin’, because in ancient writings this verb is used to describe a ‘joinder’, or ‘binding together’. It makes sense that this – rather than ‘command’ - is the meaning intended by the *Ruach HaQodesh*. The Holy One *joins* with us, and *binds us together*, with His Words – the way a man who speaks wedding vows with a woman thereby joins with, and binds himself to, her. It is, thus, in His Words [the *mitzvot* of Torah] that we have *union* with the Holy One. We meet Him in those Words – and when and as we perform any *mitzvah*, we do so in unity with Him. We do not do any *mitzvah* alone. He is the principal actor – He leads in the dance, and we follow.

people of the Holy One”, that is the thing I want to do. Others may cling to doctrines or theologies or theories or models of *soteriology* [for most of us, that’s *the science of how to be saved*]. I appreciate all that. I do not begrudge anybody his or her pet soteriological theory or doctrine. But Torah is a far more trustworthy standard than books of theology. Torah says pretty clearly that the defining characteristic of the Holy One’s people – that which makes people “His” - is a commitment to *sh’ma* the Holy One’s Voice, and to *keep* [Hebrew *sh’mar* – *i.e.* treasure, cherish, and be watchful over to protect and preserve intact], and *do* [Hebrew *asah* - interact with creatively in order to build or form something tangible, functional, and beautiful] not only the Holy One’s *mitzvot* [*i.e.* His instructions for living], but also His *mishpatim* [*i.e.* the Holy One’s statements of what is just, right, and good, on the one hand, and what is inconsistent with His holiness on the other hand], and His *chukot* [the things the Holy One says to do whether we understand it or not].

I want to become – May the Compassionate One help me to become - a *sh’ma* person.

A Sh’ma Person? What On Earth is That?

In many prior *Rabbi’s son* studies we have discussed the importance of what I have opted to call the “*sh’ma principle*”. Because the events of Deuteronomy 27 cannot be understood absent an understanding of this principle, I will briefly reiterate that principle now. The covenant lifestyle set forth in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and affirmed by Torah in general, was, and is (as confirmed by Yeshua - see Mark 12:28-31) stated by the Holy One to be the guiding and defining principle of the life of the Redeemed. This new lifestyle of the Holy One’s *am segulah/goy k’dosh* starts with the piercing directive to ‘*sh’ma!*’ “***Sh’ma Yisrael ...***” Moshe taught us.

We have to learn - even in the midst of the busy-ness of life and the din of other voices - to *discern*, and *pay close attention to*, and *highly value*, and *receive into our innermost being* and *trust in*, and *heed*, and *incorporate into our thoughts, and words, and actions*, the Words of our Divine Bridegroom. Everything we need to know of covenant life flows from that. It was so for Adam. See **Genesis 2:16**; and **3:15**. It was so for Noach. See **Genesis 6:13 ff**; **8:15 ff**; **8:21 ff**; and **9:1 ff**. It was so for Avraham. See **Genesis 12:1 ff**; **13:14 ff**; **15:1 ff**; **17:1 ff**; **21:11 ff**; and **22:1 ff**. It was so for Yitzchak. See **Genesis 26:23 ff**. It was so for Ya’akov. See **Genesis 28:13 ff**; **32:27 ff**; **35:1 ff**; and **46:2 ff**. It was so for Moshe. See **Exodus 3:1 ff**. Moshe made it clear it is to be so for us. We must learn to be *sh’ma* people.

Let a New Generation of Sh’ma-People Arise!

What is a *sh’ma* person, you ask? The original audience for this discourse was, of course, the *second generation* of those the Holy One redeemed from slavery in Egypt. As his final act as the ‘prophet of the Exodus’ Moshe is in the process of

releasing a prophetic burden through which the Holy One intends to ensure that this new generation, while no more meritorious or deserving than their fathers and mothers, is made ready in the Spirit to take possession of the precious gift the Holy One promised to the patriarchs.

All of Moshe's present discourse therefore has had a very special 'prophetic edge' to it. Every aspect of this speech provides a prophetic glimpse of what the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven wills to happen once His *sh'ma*-people leave the wilderness behind, and follow the ark, the new *Kohen-gadol* Elazar, and Moshe's assistant Y'hoshua, *across the Yarden into the land of Promise*. Let's explore that a little. The Hebrew word *sh'ma*, sometimes interpreted in our English Bibles as "listen", or "hear", and sometimes as "obey", actually means both of the above ... and much, much more. This is because Hebrew thought and language sees a thing differently than English or Greek thought and language. Hebrew thought and language see a thing not just as it appears in the instant one is looking at it, but from its tiniest *seed form all the way through to when it reaches full maturity and achieves ultimate state*. This is a critical distinction. It is as dramatic a difference as looking at and seeing things from *the Holy One's eternal perspective* vs. looking at and seeing things from *man's temporal perspective*. Hebraic thought and language are thus as different from Western thought as a snapshot of you is different from a full-length movie of your life – even from the moment of your *conception* to your reaching your place of *eternal rest*. A Western person, you see, tends naturally to have a *snapshot mentality*; he looks at you, or anyone or anything else, and takes a "snapshot" - he looks at this moment, and whatever appears before his eyes or catches the attention of his ears at that specific moment, and considers that to be reality. Western language expresses this Western viewpoint. Hence the English word "*listen*" means only "pay attention"; the English word 'hear' only means to recognize words; and the English word 'obey' only means only *do what you are told*.

The Hebrew verb *sh'ma*, however, does not just mean 'listen', or 'hear', or 'obey'. Listening, hearing, and obeying are just things one does *in a snapshot*. To *sh'ma* means *all of the above ... and also much, much more*. It means to "*listen, and pay full attention, as if your life depended on it, and, once you have paid attention, and have heard what is said, begin immediately to incorporate what has been said into your life, and adapt every aspect of your thought life, speech, and conduct to what you have heard, and begin to memorize and teach it to your children and demonstrate it to the world, until you, and the world around you, is transformed into the image of the words you hear.*" The *sh'ma* lifestyle involves having a listening ear - an "ear to hear" that hangs on every Word spoken by our Divine Bridegroom *the way a drowning man would hang onto a lifeline in order to be*

rescued. It means prizing our Divine Bridegroom's words and instructions for life *more anything else*. It means taking His Words to heart so much that we *make those Words the primary focus of one's thought-life, conversation, and goals in life*.

The *sh'ma* lifestyle involves *doing whatever our Bridegroom-King says*, and *not doing whatever He instructs against* - and it involves doing this not to "win His favor" (which we know we already have), but out of a mixture of awe and passionate love of Him and in full faith and trust. The *sh'ma* lifestyle means following the Holy One's leading and ways because we know he is good, and therefore we instinctively know that His Will is the best possible thing you could do, because He knows more about you, and what is good for you, than you do. It means *letting the Divine Bridegroom place on us His "garments of righteousness" (the mitzvot [commandments]) one by one*, and *acting out His Divine dramas* (the *Moed'im* [Biblical festivals] which each demonstrate a different aspect of His redemptive plan) for the world to see.

Consider the Shockwave Ramifications of a Sh'ma-ing Lifestyle

Please understand that I am fully aware as I begin the discussion that follows, of verses such as Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19-23, and Romans 10:9-10 - to name a few. Please understand that I believe each of those verses is both *inspired* and *100% true*. But in interpreting those verses please understand that I trust the words of Torah – the actual Words spoken by the Holy One to serve as man's "how-to" guide to covenant life - much, much more than I trust any man's commentary or any theologian's doctrine.

So the directive to '***repent, and undergo mikveh***' found in Acts 2:38 must, for me, be interpreted in light of, and viewed through the lens of, and be consistent with, Deuteronomy 27:9. And the "***if you believe in your heart ... and confess with your mouth ...***" message of Romans 10:9-10 must, for me, likewise be interpreted in light of, and viewed through the lens of, and be consistent with, Deuteronomy 27:9 and 10⁷. The same analysis must of course be applied to both the '***by grace are you saved***' message of Ephesians 2:8-10 and the '***... a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law***' message of Romans 3:28-31. The same analysis be applied

⁷ If we understand the link between *sh'ma-ing* the written Torah and 'believing in' Yeshua, this makes perfect sense. *Believing* is not an intellectual exercise. You can agree with me until your head hurts that Yeshua has to be the Messiah, but that belief is not going to save you. To *believe* – Hebraically – is to follow through on a *sh'ma* response - to not only acknowledge the truth of what one hears spoken by the Holy One, but to immerse one's self in His Words, and to speak of them as one sits in one's home and as one walks along the way, and to let His Words change every aspect of one's life. It is to become 'pregnant', as it were, with the Words of the Holy One, and to give them life. The life that one gives birth to, of course, is life *in Messiah*.

to the entire letter of Shaul to the Galatians [including but not limited to Galatians 2:15 - 3:25].

The Holy One *cannot lie* ... and that *He does not change His mind*. The Holy One's words are *forever words*. The Holy One *does not change His ideas of what is right and good and beneficial for man to 'fit the times'*. He *does not abandon a covenant partner* – or a covenant – *EVER!* Therefore when we interpret Words our Divine Bridegroom has spoken and/or inspired the first principle of interpretation we must follow must always be *the assumption of consistency: i.e. the 'given' that everything the Holy One says or inspires must always be interpreted in a manner that makes it consistent with every other thing He has previously said or inspired*.

Think of it in terms of agriculture. What you first see in *seed form*, you later see in *sprout form*, then in *mature form*, then in *Harvest form*, then in *seed form again* – *but it is all the same plant*. The genetic structure of the plant does not change. The Word of the Holy One is like seed. Torah is the Word in *seed form*. The prophets are the Word in *sprout form*. The writings are the Word in *mature form*. The apostolic writings are the Word in *harvest form* – but it is all the same Word. The essence of the message to mankind never changes. *The harvest is in the seed*. And that is not all - *the seed is also in the harvest*. And that brings us to a discussion of the soteriological [i.e. *source/essence of salvation*] teaching of Yeshua of Natzret. Let's see if Yeshua of Natzret's teaching on 'salvation' is consistent with – or contradicts - the teaching of Torah.

The Teaching of Yeshua of Natzret Concerning the Pathway to Eternal Life

Do you remember a discussion between Yeshua and an 'expert in the law', in Luke 10? The 'expert in the law' came to Yeshua and asked: "*Rabbi, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Luke 10:25. Wow - what a question! I think we can all agree that the man's inquiry is a *very weighty one*. The subject matter is not about religion, or 'doctrine' or even '*halakah*' – it is about *the key to entry into the Olam HaBa* [the World to Come]. Don't you figure everybody in the vicinity suddenly was 'all ears'? After all, at one time or another the question this man asked nags at the heart strings of virtually every man on the planet. Mankind, it seems, was created with an innate desire to know the answer to this question. And this man has had the intestinal fortitude to pose it directly - and very, very plainly - to the young Rabbi from Natzret who it was rumored just might be the Messiah.

All ears are on Yeshua now. There is no way to dodge a question of this significance. Yeshua's response to this very important question is going to be published throughout the world. What therefore will Yeshua say? What is the

answer to the question that makes the difference between eternal life and ... well, between eternal life and whatever the alternative to eternal life may be? Ingrained Christian theology would make us expect Yeshua to answer this important question by saying something that would *establish a 'new covenant'* and thereby *start a 'new religion'*. But He did *no such thing*. *Hmmm*. Do you want to know how Yeshua *did* respond? Do you want to know what Yeshua *did* say was the key to entry into eternal life? Are you ready? Are you *sure*? Okay – then read it for yourself. Turn to Luke 10:26. Yeshua responded to the all-important ‘*what must I do to inherit eternal life*’ question that burns in all of us with these words: ***What is written in the Torah.***⁸ ***What do you read there?*** Luke 10:26.

Huh? Did Yeshua just take a complete *pass on the opportunity to start a new religion* ... and then actually refer the man back to ... the Torah? Did Yeshua really just suggest that the *Torah* was the authoritative 'source document' providing the answer to the most important question known to man? But “*How can this possibly be?*” our Christian theologian friends would want us to ask. What on earth, they wonder, does *the Torah* have to do with *eternal life*? How on earth could Yeshua, of all people, suggest that eternal life is somehow *Torah-based*? Stick with me here. If *soteriology* were not *Torah-based* in some meaningful way, *why on earth would Yeshua respond to the question 'what must I do to inherit eternal life' by saying 'What is written in the Torah' and asking the man what he read there?* And what is more, when the fellow responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 [the *v'ahavta* – a part of the *sh'ma*] and Leviticus 19:18 – thus outlining the recognized rabbinic shorthand way of saying ‘*live a Torah lifestyle*’⁹ – did Yeshua rebuke him?

All the modern Christian theologians I have ever known certainly would have. But Yeshua most certainly did not. To the contrary, presented with a wonderful opportunity to declare the “*Torah path*” to eternal life as obsolete, or ‘passing away’, or the product of a ‘failed covenant’, Yeshua did just the opposite of what Christian theologians would have done. Yeshua said to the man, of all things: ***You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.*** Luke 10:28.

Think about that statement for a moment. If you pause to consider it, it might just blow your theology of salvation clear off the planet ... just like it did mine. That response of Yeshua to the ‘ultimate question’ is absolutely radical – so radical, in

⁸ Most English translations put a question mark after the statement ‘... ***what is written in the Torah.***’ But there are no punctuation marks in the Greek text, hence, adding a question mark is an act of substantive interpretation, not translation. It is just as likely Yeshua was directly answering the man’s question of ‘***what must I do to inherit eternal life?***’ very directly, by saying he was to do ‘***what is written in the Torah.***’ If so, he then followed up with a question designed to probe the man’s understanding, namely ‘***What do you read there?***’

⁹ See Rabbi Akiva’s comments in the **Palestinian Talmud, Nedarim 9:4** [second century C.E.] “*this is the major principle of Torah*”. See also **Pirke Avot 1:2**.

fact, that I dare say that it would get its speaker thrown out of any Christian seminary in America. Because you see that response of Yeshua, to that question, is totally inconsistent with the ‘doctrinal statement’ of virtually every Christian organization that has ever existed. Yeshua did not, you see, say, as our theologies would instruct Him to, ‘*Ahhh, forget the Torah, ye of little faith! That’s just ‘old covenant’ stuff. Don’t even ‘go there’!*’ Yeshua did not say: ‘*Just believe I am the son of God, Brother, and ask Me to come into your heart and be your Personal Savior, and you’re in.*’ To the contrary the Master – the One we call the Author and Finisher of our Faith – told this man as plain as day something absolutely stunning - that in *the Torah lies the key to the World to Come.*

Yeshua does not lie. He does not cater to our theologies and soteriologies. He does not abandon covenants His Father made in order to make His Kingdom more seeker friendly. He *tells it like it is.* So if Torah says it, and Yeshua said it, for me and my house, we choose to become the Holy One’s people in the way specified in Deuteronomy 27:10:

*Therefore, **sh’ma** the voice of the Holy One your God,
and do [Hebrew **asah**] his mitzvot and his statutes with which I enjoy you **this day.***

Now do not misunderstand me. This does not mean I choose *works of the law* over grace. It means I view what we know as ‘law’ and what we know as ‘grace’ as *two indivisible sides of the exact same coin.* It explains, I believe, why Shaul took care to append a reference to ‘*good works prepared in advance for us to walk in*’ [*i.e.* Torah *mitzvot*] in Ephesians 2:10 to his statements regarding salvation by grace in Ephesians 2:8-9. It explains why in the vision of Yochanan the Revelator he reported:

*And the dragon was enraged with the woman,
and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring,
who keep the mitzvot of the Holy One and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah.
[Revelation 12:17]*

The two – grace and Torah - go together ... like *wind* and *rain.* This also explains why Kefa, at the same time he called upon people to ‘*repent and turn to the Holy One so that your sins can be wiped out*’ [Acts 3:19], also said ‘... *you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant the Holy One made with your fathers.*’ Acts 3:25. It explains as well why in the same breath as Shaul of Tarsus said ‘*if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart ... you shall be saved ...*’ [Romans 10:9], he also said that those who thusly confess and believe become ‘*grafted in*’ to the ‘cultivated’ olive tree [which is Israel], and that they now ‘*share in the nourishing sap*’ of Israel [which is Torah], and are ‘*supported by the root*’ of Israel [which is the covenant made between the Holy One and Avraham]. **Romans 11:17-18.**

Do not assume, by any stretch of the imagination, that because someone clings to

Torah as to life itself that person somehow chooses Torah over Messiah Yeshua. Messiah Yeshua is *Torah exemplified*. Torah and Yeshua are, and will always be, *inseparable*. Embracing *Messiah* without simultaneously embracing *Torah* is every bit as much an illusion and deception as is embracing Torah without embracing Messiah.

In Messiah's willing submission to death on the Roman execution stake, you see, lies the exemplification of every *korban* [offering] that was ever presented at the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] or Temple. And in Messiah's promised return and reign, with Jerusalem as His capital, and Torah as His kingdom's constitution lies the exemplification of the 'possession of the land' by the mixed multitudes of the earth who will join themselves to Israel as did the mixed multitude who came out of Egyptian bondage with Israel. Please understand therefore that the *mitzvot* of Torah are identical to the 'commandments' Yeshua was referring to when He said: "***If you love Me, you will keep*** [Hebrew, *sh'mar'*] ***My commandments.***" John 14:23. If, *the 'Son' and the 'Father' are One* - as Yeshua declares to be the case— do not the son's commandments and the Father's commandments [*i.e. the Torah*] have to be identical? How could they possibly be otherwise?

In Hebrew the word most people translate into English as 'commandment' is the Hebrew word *mitzvah* [plural form, *mitzvot*]. *Mitzvah* can be translated as 'commandment', but linguistically it really refers to something more like a '*connecting protocol*'. The verb root of the word *mitzvah* is *tzavah*, *tzade*, *vav*, *hey*, which forms a Hebrew pictograph of a *humble worshipper* (hence the *tzade*, which consists of a Hebrew letter *nun* (a picture of a son/heir) prostrating itself before a Hebrew letter *yod*, or Divine Hand), *being connected* (hence the *vav*, picturing a peg or nail) with *revelation and inspiration* (hence the *hey*, a Hebrew pictograph of a window or door in a shepherd's tent, which provides the light and the air for those inside).

The Holy One *joins* with us, and *binds us together*, with His Words – the way a man who speaks wedding vows with a woman thereby joins with, and binds himself to, her. It is, thus, in His Words [the *mitzvot* of Torah] that we have *union* with the Holy One. We meet Him in those Words – and when we perform any *mitzvah* we are united with Him. We do not do any *mitzvah* alone, but only in partnership with Him. He is always the principal actor. He leads in the dance; we simply follow.

A Helpful Analogy

I am about to give you an analogy. It is just an analogy. It is merely a means of assisting the reader in understanding what I am talking about. Please do not take the analogy too seriously, or read something into it that is not intended. Okay, here goes. If you want to understand the Hebrew concept of a *mitzvah*, think with me for

a moment of something we've all probably seen on television and watched with some degree of fascination - the 'docking' of spaceships, like the space shuttle (or the Russian *Soyuz*, for that matter) and the space station, when astronauts want to leave the shuttle and enter the station or want to pick up someone in the station. Remember how this feat is accomplished? The spaceship seeking to dock with the other has to *align itself with the orbit* and *adjust to the speed* of the other. As it does so the 'pull' or 'draft' of the forward vessel, together with gentle propulsion from the vehicle approaching from behind, bring about a 'docking'.

The process of docking involves aligning trajectory, adjusting speed, making contact, and attaching the two vessels. This process follows a pre-arranged, choreographed, *connecting/docking protocol*. The engineers who plan the docking/connecting of the vessels write out complicated mathematical formulas and engineering technologies in advance that are to be followed by the astronauts in the two vessels for the connection to take place. If the protocol is not followed, the docking is flawed at best, if possible at all.

If you will permit me to analogize, the *mitzvot* of Torah are sort of like *the connecting/docking protocol* through which we 'dock'/connect with Messiah. Messiah had [indeed, has] a Torah submissive life which we can consider analogous to an 'orbit'. For us to become *unified with Him* ['in Messiah', Shaul of Tarsus would call it], we must not only go generally in His direction – we must follow a prescribed protocol to align ourselves with His 'orbit' – *i.e. His Torah-submissive lifestyle*. This does not mean that our unity with Messiah is based upon *our works*. No, not at all. In all things Messiah must *lead* and we must *follow*. In all things He must *draw us*, and we must *respond*. After all, the reality is that we cannot attach ourselves to Him *unless and until He draws us to Him*, with a spirit analogous in operation to the gravity and 'drag' of the spaceship in orbit.

We offer ourselves to Him, but that is the extent of what we can do. He must receive us, and latch onto us, or *we simply cannot be unified with Him - no matter how long we try, in our own power, to emulate His orbit*. Moreover, once the 'docking' takes place [i.e. once we present ourselves to Him and He accepts us, and latches on to us], the majority, if not all, the power to go forward must be supplied by Him, such that we just get pulled along by Him. From the point of union forward, we are joined, and all our actions absolutely must follow the orbit of the one to whom we are joined. If/when it doesn't we become disconnected and have to dock again [through the process called *teshuvah*, which is a second stage *docking protocol specified in Torah and amplified/clarified in the writings of the prophets*].

Since Messiah is in a Torah-submissive 'orbit', if we are docked to/unified with Him, we necessarily will, as long as we are 'in' Him, remain in a Torah-submissive

orbit as well. If you want to understand this better, Beloved, go back and read Yeshua's teaching on *unity with the Father*, found in John 17:6-11. Yeshua remained unified [docked, so to speak] with the Father by fulfilling His *mitzvot*. We are to follow Yeshua's example. The *mitzvot* of Torah are to be our 'connecting protocol'.

The Sh'ma Lifestyle and Yeshua

If we truly commit our lives to *sh'ma* the Divine Bridegroom's Voice – which I believe, based upon today's aliyah, Deuteronomy 6, and Luke 10, among other passages, in the Bible tells us is the main qualification for 'becoming' His people – I believe we will be Yeshua's "sheep", and will know His Voice, and will follow [Hebrew, *halak*, *walk with*] Him. See **John 10:27-30**. I believe we will do so because we see Him doing what the Holy One does. **John 10:37**. So I do not see the *sh'ma* lifestyle as anything that can bring life apart from intimate relationship with Yeshua. Embracing the *sh'ma* lifestyle described in the Torah has nothing to do with being 'under the law', with striving to be justified 'by works of the law', or with judging oneself or others by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, new moon celebration, or a day of rest. Embracing the *sh'ma* lifestyle of Torah is simply about recognizing, and becoming intimately familiar with, and responding to, the Voice of our covenant partner.

If we truly seek after and follow our Covenant Partner's Voice with all our hearts, you see, *we cannot help but recognize Yeshua, who spoke with that same Voice - as the Prophet prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18, as the Branch prophesied in Isaiah 11, as the Servant prophesied in Isaiah 53, and as the Messiah King prophesied in Zechariah 9:9-14, 12:10, and 13:7 – 14:9.*

To *sh'ma* Torah is not by any means to be 'cut off' from Messiah as some would have you believe – it is, to the contrary, to *be united with Messiah in ever increasing avenues of practical, intimacy-building endeavors*. For Messiah is the Living Torah.

A Brief Look At Haftarah Ki Tavo

Isaiah 60:1-22

Shabbat *Ki Tavo* is the sixth of seven "Sabbaths of Consolation" following Tisha B'Av, and preparing us for the High Holiday season. The Haftarah selected for this week is a passage wherein the prophet of consolation, *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah], tells the rag-tag remnant of Israel that has returned from Babylon to the land of promise. only to find rubble and destruction everywhere, ***Kumi ohri!*** ["*Arise!*"! "*Shine!*"!] ***"Your Light has come"***, he says. ***"The glory of the Holy One has risen upon you"***, he says.

Although it seems impossible, he also says, ***"Nations will walk by your Light"*** and

the abundant wealth of the kingdoms of the earth will flow into your country's economy, and all the world will worship the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov *in spirit and in truth*.

*Foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you;
for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor have I had mercy on you.
Your gates also will be open continually;
they shall not be shut day nor night;
that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, and their kings led captive.
For that nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish;
yes, those nations will be utterly wasted.*

[Isaiah 60:10-12]

Although it may not look like it at the moment, all Creation and the nations of earth await the manifestation of righteous sons of God. As the darkness that even now casts its shadow upon the earth and its kingdoms falls, wreaking devastation on mankind's institutions and value-system, vast multitudes of people will run to the true Light, the light of true righteousness that reflects the glory of He who said, *"let there be Light"*.

This is the week of dramatic shifting of focus in the Prophetic Message. The season of "Sabbaths of Consolation" following Tisha B'Av is in its sixth week. And it is in this week that Yeshayahu, the prophet of Consolation, tells the rag-tag remnant of Covenant sons and daughters who have forsaken Babylon in search of the ways of the Holy that the prophetic calling of the Holy One as set forth in Torah is no longer a far-away promise to hope for. Indeed, right now is OUR TIME TO SHINE! So arise! Become a burning and shining lamp! And SHINE! Your time is coming! A new and brighter day is on the horizon! Your/our faithful service of the Holy One in exile will be rewarded!

V'amech kulam tzadikim

Your people will all be righteous;

L'olam yirshu aretz

they will possess the land forever;

netzer mata'ay ma'aseh yadai l'hitpa'er

the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.

Ha-katon yiheyeh la'elef v'hatza'ir l'goy atzum

The smallest will become a thousand, and the least a mighty nation;

ani Adonai be'itah achishenah

I, the Holy One, will hasten it in its time.

[Isaiah 60:20-22]

A Note On The Apostolic Writings
We Read in Connection With Parsha Ki Tavo
Luke 21:1-6

The apostolic discussions that I have selected to accompany parsha *Ki Tavo* come from the 21st chapter of Lukas' account of the life and earthly ministry of Yeshua of Natzret. Lukas is identified for us as a '*beloved physician*', and faithful companion of Shaul of Tarsus. **Colossians 4:14; I Timothy 4:11**. In this week's reading from Lukas' account, it is almost festival time. Yeshua is at the Temple in Jerusalem with His *talmidim*. After Yeshua has taught the people from the Torah, His authority is questioned by the chief priests and scribes, who seek to entrap Him in His own words, with *trick questions*. Yeshua skillfully evades their entrapments, then He strikes back in a way that He knows will make it virtually impossible for them not to crucify Him. "*In the hearing of all the people*" he exposes the scribes - the most respected religious leaders of the day - as loving honor and prestige from men more than they love the Holy One¹⁰. Yeshua cautions not only His *talmidim* but also all the people who had come to the Temple to "*beware*" these men, whom He accused of putting on a show of piety while their hearts were being led by the wily serpent down the Runaway Bride's broad pathway toward damnation.

Yeshua then contrasted the simple, trusting, unheralded and virtually unseen faithfulness of a widow, who gives all she has seeking nothing in return, to those engaged in high-profile ministry.

He looked up, and saw the rich people who were putting their gifts into the treasury.

He saw a certain poor widow casting in two small brass coins..

*He said, **Truly I tell you, this poor widow put in more than all of them,
for all these put in gifts for God from their abundance,
but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.***

[Luke 21:1-5]

How could Yeshua say such a thing? With the widow there was certainly no "bang for the buck"; her mites could not feed herself, much less the hungry multitudes; her offering would not adorn a priest's office nor a meeting hall with even the slightest bauble of religious art; no plaque would be erected in her honor. What could her two mites possibly mean to anyone? Perhaps the widow knew, however, what most today do not - that the purpose of Torah-inspired giving is not to bring about some good in the earth [is the arm of our Divine Bridegroom so short that He depends upon our generosity?], or to bring the giver any good thing in this life or the next.

¹⁰ Yeshua does not say these men do not love or serve the Holy One; He merely points out poignantly that, though they have a measure of love for the Holy One, perhaps intense love, *they unconsciously have come to love the prestige and the feeling of importance that comes with their ministry even more*. Yeshua sees these men as deceived and seduced rather than malevolent. They are to be pitied, not hated or condemned.

Pure offerings simply reflect the glory of the Father of Light, who unselfishly and unceasingly gives simply because it is His nature to do so. ***Kumi Ohri!***

Please heed Yeshua's challenge not to give "give to get". Be a giver, yes - but not because you want to "make a difference", "bless" a man or a ministry, or help establish a work or a cause. That is not your responsibility. Be a giver, yes - but not out of a sense of duty, obligation, or guilt. Give, when you give, because the Spirit of God inside you cries out [without help from modern-day scribes suggesting any such thing]: "*This is why I caused this money to pass into your hands! No one is watching - DO IT NOW!*"

Open your eyes and look around you in your neighborhood, the marketplace, or the streets of your town - don't worry about the tax deduction, and you may be surprised how easy hearing our Divine Bridegroom's voice can be. Please note, however, that Yeshua was absolutely not impressed by monuments and buildings any more than He was impressed with large donations to religious causes. Lukas will make this clear by wrapping up his narrative of Yeshua's teaching on the 'widow and her mites' as follows:

*As some were talking about the temple and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts, he said, "**As for these things which you see, the days will come, in which there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down.**"*
[Luke 21:6]

What impresses you? Is it 'beautiful stones and gifts'? Is it a show of piety? Or is it *hearts and lives of real people 'broken and spilled out' unto the Bridegroom-King?*

*May you never be impressed by temples or ministries made with human hands;
May your heart long instead for a City Whose Builder and Maker is the Bridegroom of Heaven.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

The 4th Petition: Ge'ulah [Kinsman Redemption]

Re'eh v'onyeinu v'rivah riveinu

Behold our troubles, and carry away our sorrows

u'goleinu m'hera l'ma'an Sh'mecha

and redeem us quickly, for the sake of Your Name/Character

Ki go'el chazak atah

for You are a strong Kinsman-Redeemer

Baruch Atah Adonai, go'el Yisrael

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel