

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: *Torah Ki Tavo:* Deuteronomy 28:15-29:8
***Haftarah:* Isaiah 60:13-22**
***B'rit Chadasha:* Luke 21:5-6**

The Holy One will scatter you among all peoples
[Deuteronomy 28:64a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 32:7-9;

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

***V'hayah im-lo tish'ma b'kol Adonai Eloheicha* – and it will come to pass that if/as/when/to the extent you do not sh'ma all the Holy One says ... *lish'mor la'asot et-kol-mitzvotav v'chukotav asher anochi metzaveicha hayom* – to cherish, prioritize, and carefully watch over to do/make/build all the mitzvot and chukot with which I am enjoining you this day Deuteronomy 28:15a.**

Moshe has brought us into the ultimate crucible of Torah - the valley of decision. He has shown us clearly that there are two very different pathways diverging before our eyes, offering to lead us through very different terrain to very different destinations. We must choose which pathway we want to walk, which terrain we prefer, and which destination we seek. Pathway no. 1 is the Pilgrim's Pathway of Torah. If we choose and follow this pathway the earth, the sky, and even the rain will respond with rejoicing, and the doors will open for unprecedented levels of Divine blessing, fruitfulness, abundance, and shalom. If, as, and when we walk this pathway our Heavenly Father's blessings will actually PURSUE US - instead of us having to pursue them. We will draw water from the river of life, and the leaves of our trees will bring healing to the nations. Everything to which we put our hand will prosper for the sake and to the glory of the great 'Kingdom-of-Heaven Infusion' the Holy One has planned for planet earth. It will be the stuff dreams are made of; it will be life, and *life abundant*; it will be *life without limitations* – the way life was meant to be lived - *if!* Our lives will conform to the 'blessed man' picture of Psalm 1:1-3 and the '*surely good and mercy will follow*' picture of Psalm 23 – *if!* We will serve as the *burning and shining light to the nations* that we were designed to provide – *if!* We will become a *beautiful city set on a hill*, beckoning to all to *come to the Creator of the Universe and taste and see that He is good* – *if!*

But, alas, it is a big '*if*'. Everything Moshe said about this destiny of atmosphere

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shifting environmental influence came with a warning. The ‘showers of blessings’ the Holy One wants to release do not flow automatically. Before those blessings are released, we must provide a trustworthy ‘stewardship receptacle’ to receive them, manage them, add the pure water of *humanity in its redeemed, and therefore loving, humble, joyful, peaceable, gentle, patient, and self-denying, manifestation* to them, and distribute them according to the Creator’s instructions. Moshe made it clear that in order for us to experience the pursuing and overtaking *b’rachot* is going to depend on us collaborating with the Holy One in a radical, sustained, consistent way. Do you remember what Moshe said the free flow of the *b’rachot fountain* usward depended on? Let me remind you.

The 3 Essential Secrets of Abundant Life

The ‘pursuing and overtaking blessings’ Moshe has been describing to us in detail are *like heat-seeking missiles* that are *aimed at*, and *locked onto*, a certain kind of people. What kind of people, you ask? People who ...

... listen to/tune hearts, minds and souls to [Hebrew, *sh'ma*]
the mitzvot of the Holy One ...

who ... cherish, prioritize, and are careful to observe [Hebrew, *sh'mar*]

and who ... make/build/apply creative energy to/do [Hebrew, *asah*]

[*them/those mitzvot*],

***and who ... turn not aside from any of the words that [the Holy One] enjoins,
to the right hand or to the left,
or go after other gods to serve them.***

[Deuteronomy 28:13-14]

Please note that what the *b’rachot* depends upon is NOT sinless perfection. Nor is it human ‘performance’ of a Divine checklist of things ‘to do’ or not ‘to do’. Please note that it *does not depend upon ‘fulfilling the letter of the law’*. Please understand that it *allows a lot of room for error*. Please keep in mind that mercy and forgiveness are – and have always been - factored into the covenant at every turn. That is why the Psalmist, though he was a sinner like everyone else, could say with complete confidence ***Surely goodness and mercy follow me ...*** *Mercy, grace, and forgiveness* have always been available to man. It has been so from the beginning, because mercy, grace, and forgiveness are essential parts of the Nature and are critical elements of the Persona of the Creator. They have, therefore, been built into His Covenant all along. Ask Noach. Ask Avraham. Ask Yitzchak, Ya’akov, Reuven, Sh’mon, Levi, Y’hudah, and Yosef. Ask Moshe, and Aharon, and even the sons of Korach. Ask David. Mercy, grace, and forgiveness are by no means ‘new covenant’ innovations. Messiah did not walk the earth to introduce ‘mercy’, or ‘forgiveness’, or ‘grace’ – He came to earth to awaken unrepentant hearts to desire to appropriate and walk in the deep wells of

mercy, forgiveness, and grace which had always been available through the Covenant.

Why do you think the covenant the Holy One cut with our ancestors at Sinai included such things as *korban chata't* [approach of the Holy One through a surrogate animal which bore one's sin]², and *korban asham* [approach of the Holy One through a surrogate animal which bore one's guilt/shame]³? If there was no mercy, no grace, and no forgiveness before Yeshua's death, what purpose did such things possibly serve? How do you think our patriarch Avram was forgiven for his many sins? How do you think our matriarch Sarai was forgiven for her part in the Hagar fiasco? How do you think Rivkah and Ya'akov were forgiven for their deception of Yitzchak and Esav? How do you think Rachel was forgiven for her sin of stealing her father's household idols? How do you think Yosef's [Joseph's] brothers were forgiven for the sin of selling Yosef into slavery and lying to their father about it? How do you think, even after the Torah was given at Sinai, Israel was forgiven for the sins of the *golden calf*, the *spies*, and *Ba'al Pe'or*?

The Holy One knows humankind very, very well. He knows the extreme frailty of our souls in their fallen state. He knows the acute distractibility of our minds. He knows how susceptible our hearts are to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He knows how predisposed our pseudo-intellec[t]s are toward high-sounding but spiritually bankrupt forms, formats, formulas, moods, and mantras of abstraction-obsessions like philosophy, ideology, political theory, economic matrix, pseudo-science, pseudo-medicine, religion, creed, and so-called 'social justice' (which in actuality always means *anti-social ethnicity-centric or class-based vengeance*). And He knows why we are in this depraved state. He therefore neither *expects nor requires us to be perfect*. Indeed, He provides a way for us to have all our weaknesses compensated for, to have all our waywardness corrected, for all our sins to be atoned for, and for all guilt, shame, and uncleanness to be removed from us as far as East is from West. It all has to do with a '*Lamb slain before the foundation of the World*' ... if you get my drift. That is why long ago, in the aftermath of the 'golden calf' debacle, the Holy One made it clear to Moshe that He was not malicious, unforgiving, and/or unapproachable in regard to fallible humans, but was instead [in His own words]:

*... compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness,
maintaining love to myriads,*

² This method of restoring fellowship between a sinner and the Holy One is discussed in Leviticus 4. Please see Thursday's Shiur of Parsha *Vayikra* for more details.

³ This method of removing the barrier of guilt and shame between a sinner and the Holy One is discussed in Leviticus 5. Please see Friday's Study of parsha *Vayikra* for more details.

and ***forgiving*** [of] ***wickedness, rebellion, and sin.***
Exodus 34:6-7⁴

After all, the covenant made at Sinai is at its essence a MARRIAGE covenant. What Torah is, you see, is the *Ketuvah*⁵ the Divine Bridegroom has given His Bride. No man – and certainly not God – can expect – much less demand - perfection from his betrothed wife. Mercy, grace, and forgiveness are, therefore, built into the covenant *from the beginning*. Hence neither the covenant at Sinai nor its *b'rachot* were ever dependent upon the strength or performance of the weaker partner in the covenant [that is, *us*]. The covenant and the *b'rachot* were instead always dependent merely on *the willingness of the weaker partner to stay by the side of the Stronger no matter what* – for richer or poorer, so to speak – and to *sh'ma* [often translated into English inaccurately as ‘obey’] the stronger partner. What the *b'rachot* depended upon was the Betrothed Bride simply maintaining a *Bridal orientation* and *Bridal passion* even in the midst of what the Holy One understood to be not only immaturity and imperfection but a pretty significant occasional flare-up of ‘stiff neckedness’. Moshe listed the essential elements of this *Bridal orientation to life* for us in yesterday’s aliyah. The Bridal Orientation to which we are called consists of *loving the Bridegroom-King zealously – i.e. with all our heart, soul, strength, and substance* - and demonstrating that love to the world by *sh'ma-ing* our King’s sweet Voice and joyfully *sh'mar-ing* and *asah-ing* His instructions for human life.

In yesterday’s teaching we discussed in some detail what each of these Hebrew verbs entails⁶, and we discussed how and why each of those aspects of walking

⁴ The Holy One concluded this Self-description by adding the words: ***and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation.*** Viewed in context, this clearly means that the Holy One forgives those who sin but then make *t'shuvah* according to Torah [via the *korban chata'at*, via making restitution, and via successful return to the *sh'ma* lifestyle] but did NOT forgive, and was sure to inflict a just and right punishment upon, those who willfully refused His mercy and forgiveness, and rejected the Torah-prescribed means of reconciliation, and who passed this attitude of willful rebellion and rejection of the Holy One on to their children and children’s children.

⁵ A *Ketuvah* is a part of the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony. Basically a formal marriage contract, it details the covenant undertakings of the parties. In the form presently in use, primarily what are spelled out are the *husband's obligations* to his wife, to provide her with food, clothing, dwelling and pleasure. The present form in use also creates a lien on all the husband’s property securing the promise by agreeing to pay or bequeath to the wife a sum of money and support should he divorce or predecease her. Signed by the groom and witnessed by two people, the *Ketuvah* is a legally binding agreement, enforceable by secular courts of law. The *ketuvah* is often written as an illuminated manuscript, and becomes a work of art in itself, and many couples frame it and display it in their home.

⁶ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “listen” is *sh'ma* – *shin, mem, ayin*, Strong’s Hebrew word # 8085, sometimes translated “he listens”, sometimes “he hears”, and sometimes “he obeys”. The first usage is in Genesis 3:8, where we are told of Adam and Chava, after the Fall: ***And they heard [sh'ma] the voice of the Holy One God walking in the garden [in the cool of the day]: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Holy One God amongst the trees of the garden.***

out Bridal Orientation is about RELATIONSHIP, not about some required minimum level of PERFORMANCE. Our Bridegroom is committed by both His Eternal Nature and the express terms of the Covenant He swore to our forefathers to love us zealously – and to nurture us relentlessly - irrespective of our occasionally untoward behavior. We therefore cannot make our Bridegroom love us one whit more - or for that matter one whit less - by our conduct. The relationship between us and the Divine Bridegroom is not founded upon – much less dependent upon - our perfection. Our relationship is rooted in a Grand Redemptive Plan to which the Bridegroom-King committed before He even spoke the world as we know it into being⁷. Our relationship is powered by the blood of a Lamb slain before the foundation of the cosmos. See **Revelation 13:8 and 17:8**. It is guaranteed by promises He made first to Avraham, then to the assembly at Sinai, multiple generations before we were even born. We have done nothing to win His affection. We can do nothing to earn His love. We do not need to. It is as sure as the sunrise. But we can enjoy our Bridegroom-King's love a whole lot more, and we can much more effectively and believably testify to others of the exquisite wonders and infinite pleasures of His love, if instead of insisting on doing what seems right to us, we actually devote some time and effort, energy and passion, into actually *doing things His way*. The maximization – i.e. the full enjoyment of the benefits of - our relationship, and the fulfillment of the essential purpose of the relationship vis-à-vis the world in which we live, requires significant engagement and participation on our part. After all, for any marriage covenant to work, the bride must *be responsive to*, and must *cooperate with*, her bridegroom. She must take a '*whithersoever thou goest, I will go*', and '*whithersoever thou lodgest, I will lodge*' approach to life. To maximize our enjoyment of the relationship we must think and act like a passionate bride – not behave like either an untamed shrew, a *kept concubine*, a *spoiled mistress*, or a *paid escort*. We must act like a *partner in Covenant* – not an ungrateful beggar. We must be careful not to work at cross-purposes against our King. We must

The word our English Bibles translate as “keep” or ‘observe’ in most instances is *sh'mar* [*shin, mem, resh*], Strong's Hebrew word #8104, pronounced *shaw-mar*'. This verb root means to diligently defend, to guard, to keep watch over, to protect, to cherish, to treasure, and to keep from harm. The first usage is found in Genesis 2:15: *And the Holy One God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep [i.e. sh'mar] it.*

The word our English Bibles translate as ‘do’ is *asah* [*ayin, shin, hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #6213]. This verb paints a Hebraic picture of a potter fashioning something recognizable and useful from a lump of clay. It involves *application of creative energy to build* – to take something from a raw state to an improved and vastly more functional or artistic state. It means to bring out the potential in raw materials – to make them conform to the image in the mind of the creator like the clay conforms to the image in the mind of the potter.

⁷ Ephesians 1:4 says that the Holy One *chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Yeshua Ha-Mashiach to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.* See also **Matthew 13:35, Matthew 25:34, Luke 11:50, Hebrews 4:3, and I Peter 1:20.**

never leave Him to tread the winepress alone. And that truth brings us to the component of the covenant which IS dependent upon us.

The Substance of What English Speakers Call ‘Faith’

The kind of blessedness described in Deuteronomy 28:1-15 has always been and must always be - conditional. Because, you see, the mathematics of the Bible is that *sh'ma* plus *sh'mar* plus *asah* = faith/faithfulness [Hebrew *emunah*]. *Emunah* - the Hebrew word translated into English alternatively as *faith* and *faithfulness* - is the word from which we get the word *amen* [the first Hebrew word most of us learned!]. *Amen* [Hebrews would pronounce it *amein*] does not, however, mean ‘*preach it, Brother!*’ or ‘*end of prayer!*’, as we often hear it used. *Amein* is, instead a *covenant-reaffirming word*. *Amein* describes what Avraham did when he heard, and respected, and internalized, and lived his life in reliance upon, and refused to relinquish or give up on, the seed and land promises of the Holy One. *Amein* is the *behavioral response* that was ‘*credited to him as righteousness*’.

To have *emunah* means not just to believe something about God or Torah or Yeshua is true or real; it is, instead, *to acknowledge and reverence the Holy One* [Deuteronomy 6:1-2; Proverbs 3:1-12]; to *love Him as He instructed that He is to be loved* – *i.e.* by *sh'ma*-ing all His *mitzvot*, by *sh'mar*-ing everything having to do with His *brit*, and by *asah*-ing His *mishpatim* [Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-15] - and by faithfully stewarding, and producing fruit from, and tending to the needs of the disadvantaged through our engagement with, all the land and spheres of influence the Holy One assigns to us [Deuteronomy 26:1-15].

As Shaul of Tarsus, the self-described *Hebrew of Hebrews*, taught us in Romans:

How can anyone aman
if they have not first sh'ma-ed.
[Romans 10:14]

We all know that *communication*, *commitment*, and *working together to build a home* are the three elements of a successful marriage. These three elements are what *sh'ma* [the communication aspect], *sh'mar* [the commitment aspect], and *asah* [the building of a home aspect] are all about. Of course, every marriage has “rules” and “protocols”, spoken and unspoken. But the relationship does not flow from the rules or protocols; it has to be the other way around. The ‘rules’ and protocols are intended merely to be the garden pathway on which the loving couple walks together hand in hand. Their purpose is merely to facilitate the growth, and guide the maturation, of the relationship.

But ... What Is It Like on the Other Side of the ‘If Crucible’?

Ah, but all the lovely talk about *b'rachot* pursuing and overtaking us was from

yesterday's aliyah – and the Bridal Pathway side of the *'if crucible'*. Today's aliyah presents a very different picture. Today's aliyah shows us what it is like on 'the dark side'. Today's aliyah gives us a guided tour of what life is like for those who prodigalize – i.e. those who though they have been called to and have even begun to experience Bridal Orientation and Passion, choose nonetheless to deliberately walk away from the lovely 'garden path' laid out for them by our Divine Bridegroom [i.e. the Torah], and to instead walk right out of the brilliant light of intimacy with the Holy One into ... well, into *the deep, cavernous realm of darkness, chaos, and chasing-the-wind that exists wherever the Bridegroom-King's Presence is not manifested*. If, after we walk off into that smoldering abyss, we ignore all His calls to come back to His Pathway and His Companionship, the abyss will take its toll on us, on our families, and on our generations. He will not do these evil things to us – in anger or otherwise; we will do them to ourselves. Poisonous trees bear poisonous fruit – so if you choose to eat from them, don't blame the gardener when you reap the consequences!

Please note that the kind of lapses from the Bridal Pathway that Moshe is talking about in today's aliyah is not a short-term bout of stiff-necked-ness. He is not talking about a couple of episodes of 'losing it' and acting out like a spoiled child. He is not talking about a few bobbles experienced along a pathway obviously centered upon the Holy One and generally headed in the direction of Kingdom righteousness. He is not talking about a few occasional self-centered indulgences. All those minor, sporadic kinds of indiscretions are clearly *contemplated by and atoned for under* the terms of the amazing life-covenant our Bridegroom-King crafted for us. These things all have consequences, of course; and they all invoke in-house fatherly disciplines; but they do not bring into effect the spiraling waves of painful 'giving over' to the dark energy of the outside world that Moshe describes in today's aliyah⁸.

The Divine Bridegroom of Heaven knew He was not betrothing Himself to a bunch of flawless robots. He delighted in our humanity – and He loved and chose and committed His troth to us even in our painfully obvious immaturity. So no, what Torah is talking about in the last part of Deuteronomy 28 is not about a few missteps or stumbles. What Moshe is talking about in today's aliyah is *full-fledged rebellion* – a *deliberate rejection of our Divine Bridegroom in general and of His garden path and Lover's Dance [i.e. the Torah lifestyle] in particular*. What Torah warns us will subject us to the 'curses' of the dark realm is blatant *spiritual adultery* – i.e. willfully choosing to cast our lot with, and take our pleasure from, some other lover or collection of lovers rather than walking with and taking delight in the Holy One our Redeemer. What today's frightening

⁸ Shaul describes this 'giving over' to the outside world process in vivid detail in Romans 1:18 – 2:4.

aliyah is about is a self-consumed, consciously chosen life lived with both the Garden Path and the jilted Bridegroom rapidly disappearing in a person's - or the nation's – metaphorical rear-view mirror. Today's aliyah makes it clear what people can expect to encounter down the road a little way if they choose to live life *on the 'dark side' - on the treacherous pathway of the Runaway Bride.*

The Crooked and Broad Way That Leads To Destruction

The garden path our Divine Bridegroom promises to walk with us down is a straight and *narrow way*. See **Matthew 7:13-14**. But there are a multitude of other paths of human experience one can choose. Secular society offers many other paths, many other 'ways'. Most of the paths offered by secular society are paths that veer off the garden path 'to the left'. To this side of the garden path are a series of trails all called *lawlessness*. These roads are taken by those whose motto is, like the restaurant chain *Outback*, '*no rules, just right*'. These trails are the ways a man's heart says are right, but which the Holy One's *mitzvot* and *mishpatim* call wrong.

Do not be deceived by the left-leaning '*no rules, no accountability*' rhetoric of secular humanism. The paths secular society offer are the paths of which Scripture says: ***There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*** **Proverbs 14:12**. It is not secular society alone however that offers other routes of travel to the Holy One's redeemed. Religious institutions and people offer many other paths as well. Some of the pathways offered by religious institutions and persons with religious spirits even declare the Bridal Pathway of Torah to be obsolete or superseded. They offer a detour off the Bridegroom's pathway that also leads toward the left. These off-ramps from the Covenant amount to *lawlessness* every bit as much as the pathways created and sponsored by secular society. Religious folk just cover their lust for lawlessness with Biblical but badly out-of-context phrases like 'we are under grace, not law' and 'we feel led by the Spirit'. They 'take away' from the Torah of the Bridegroom-King. They write their own terms of betrothal to suit their fancy and cater to their flesh and self-will, and then arrogantly declare to the Holy One how much smarter – and better at building a Kingdom – they are than He is.

Occasionally, however, other religious people and institutions will blaze a trail that veers off of the garden path established for us by the Holy One in the opposite direction - *i.e. toward the right hand*. The paths that lead off in this direction always exalt form over substance, and conformity to a doctrine or code of conduct over intimate responsiveness to the Bridegroom-King. Those who promote such paths take one or more of the kind and loving instructions the Holy One gave us for our journey through life, obsess over them, and make their idea

of what those instructions should look like into idols far more important to them than the Bridegroom Himself. They then add their own sadistic twist to them, and insist that everyone else conform to their *halakah*. Instead of *internalizing* the Holy One's instructions for living, they *externalize* them, and employ them as *instruments of judgment* instead of as the *invitations to mercy* that they were intended to be. This is what happens when a person's goal in life is not to have an intimate relationship with the Divine Bridegroom, but to *escape one* - and yet to feel good about oneself - i.e. to feel *prideful*, *self-righteous*, and *morally superior to others* - in the process. One road that can lead in that direction is *ministry for reward* - whether the reward takes the form of money or the praise and admiration of man. Another is public '**philanthropy**'. Still another is flashy, attention-getting, high profile '**public service**'. There are many more.

What awaits us if we reject a walk with our Divine Bridegroom on His beautiful garden path, and choose one of the paths offered by the Serpent as our way? Torah calls it *arar* - what our English translations of the Bible define as a 'curse'.

The 'Curse' of Added-To, Subtracted From, and Mis-Applied Torah

We have defined '*arar*' as the *placing of limitations and restrictions*⁹ on someone. But please understand that in this context the 'curse' is nothing the Holy One is placing anyone under in spitefulness. The curse we are talking about is not like the *hexes*, spells, and '*evil eye*' of witchcraft. The essence of the *arar'im* [KJV curses] we read about in today's aliyah is *self-inflicted misery*. The curse is something one who departs from our Divine Bridegroom's garden path voluntarily DOES TO HIMSELF or HERSELF.

Here is the problem. The pursuing and overtaking blessings mentioned in the first part of Deuteronomy chapter 28 follow the activated Words of Life, not us - so they do not follow anyone who leaves the garden path. If we leave the path of the mitzvot, we quickly find ourselves 'on our own'. We start noticing an increase in thorns, in thistles, and in the amount of the sweat of the brow it takes to get our daily bread, forgive those who trespass against us, avoid being led into temptation, and be delivered from the harsh reality of self-will. It works like this: Whenever a person chooses to *exit the Bridegroom's path*, he/she is also choosing to cut off the flow of the Bridal Pathway blessings. Such a person

⁹ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as "curse" in this passage is '*arar*'. While a *b'racha* is spoken concerning one who submits to the voice and touch of the speaker, an '*arar*' is spoken concerning one who rebels, who has heard the call to *sh'ma*, but who willfully refuses to submit. It is spoken to, and of, one who *refuses* the *b'racha* of the Holy One. An '*arar*' is the 'flip side' of the *b'racha* - whatever he who *sh'ma*'s experiences by way of *b'racha*, one who *lo sh'ma*'s will experience the opposite by way of '*arar*'.

becomes the equivalent of a fish out of water. Like the fish out of water, the process of death begins for such a person (or nation) the moment he/she/it leaves the environment for which he/she/it was designed - *i.e.* the riverbed of the river of life, health and peace. But death does not come quickly – it works like a wasting disease, wearing down the person or nation in slow, tedious, and miserable stages. If the person or nation does not get back in the water, bodily systems and organs begin fail one at a time – and the person or nation gradually – and painfully – begins to wither and die.

It is all *so unnecessary*. It is all *so fixable* through the covenant protocol of *teshuvah*, modeled for us by Ya'akov upon his return to *Beit-El*. See Genesis 35:1-35. If a person stubbornly refuses to fix it through *teshuvah*, however, and chooses to instead continue traversing the vast untamed outback of the pathway of the Runaway Bride, that person will soon encounter *an angry brother like unto Kayin* – a narcissist with a bad attitude and a stone in his hand. If the Kayin-clone doesn't finish you off, you'll find yourself overtaken by a *famine*. If the famine doesn't kill you, you'll find yourself dealing with the *pestilence*. If you somehow make it through the pestilence, *things that go bump in the night* will start to petrify you. If you don't have a heart attack and die from that, *enemy armies* will encircle you and attack. And if they don't snuff out your life completely, *they'll drag you off into captivity*, and you'll find no rest, and you'll develop tremors in your heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. In the morning you will say, 'Oh, that it were evening!' At evening you will say, 'Oh, that it were morning!' – all because of the fear which terrifies your heart and because of the sights which your eyes see. And if none of that causes you to make *teshuvah*, you will be auctioned cheap to a thankless world in a place with an attitude a lot like Pharaoh's Egypt. See **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**. You will be made slaves of powerful – and oft-times cruel – men and nations. Do not blame them; the fault lies closer to home. Neither those who sold you nor those who purchased you did this to you; you did this to yourself. It is just what happens when you leave, and stubbornly refuse to return to, the Bridal Pathway.

The Greatest Loneliness On Earth

The worst part of it all is that one who is fleeing intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom and running away from His Presence either into *lawlessness* (the route to the left of the garden path of Torah) or into *legalism* (the route to the right of the garden path of Torah) *does not carry the blessedness of the Holy One's Presence into the darkness* when he or she flees. He or she *runs out from under the Light* of the Holy One's manifest Presence, and finds instead the darkness - where His Face is completely hidden.

Remember, the covenant the Holy One made with us provides that *it is always Him who is the stronger partner in the relationship*. He is the Bridegroom. It is, therefore, Him Who provides for us as a Husband, Him Who gives us security, and provision, and Him Who keeps us in a state of wellness, and peace and blessing. Leaving our Divine Bridegroom – running away from the garden path where He *walks with us* and *talks with us* and *tells us we are His own* - means leaving all those things. It means leaving His provision. It means leaving His security. It means leaving the state of wellness and peace and blessing with which He covers us.

Walking away from intimacy with our Divine Bridegroom, cutting off communication with Him, and rebelling against our commitment to walk in His Ways means *leaving the light of His Presence behind*, and *walking foolishly into a deep and foreboding darkness* – a darkness where there is no stronger partner like Him to be found to *walk with us*, to *buoy us up*, and to *hedge us about with thorns*.

The *good news* is that our Covenant Partner in Heaven does not bid us ‘good riddance’ just because we take a few steps off the garden path.

The good news is that wherever we may go our Divine Bridegroom passionately pursues us and continually calls us to return to Him - and to the lovely garden path from which we strayed. If we reject His loving calls to return [i.e. make *t’shuvah*] to Him however, at some point He exercises ‘tough love’, and lets us go. And that is where the *really bad trouble* comes in. The darkness out there off the garden path contains *a series of spiral staircases*, all *going down*. And the descent is *anything but pretty*. Thus today’s aliyah begins with these words:

It will come to pass
if you will not tune your heart, mind and spirit to [sh’ma]
the voice of the Holy One your God,
to cherish, delight in, prioritize, and diligently observe [sh’mar]
to apply creative energy in the doing of [asah] all his mitzvot and his statutes
with which I enjoin you this day,
that kol ha-kelalot ha-eleh [all these curses] shall come on you, and overtake you.

Arur [limited; restricted in fruitfulness] you will be in the city
and arur will you be in the field.
Your basket and arur your kneading-trough will be Arur.
The fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground will be Arur.
as will the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock.
You will be Arur when you come in,
and you will be arur when you go out.

[Deuteronomy 28:16-19]

The ‘*ararim* [KJV curses] that the Holy One wants us to know await us if we turn away from Him – either to the right [to a *legalistic*, man-focused misuse of Torah] or to the left [to *lawlessness*, a ‘whatever feels good’ thumbing one’s nose at Torah]¹⁰, or mixing the worship of the Holy One with forms of pagan idolatry – continue verse after verse through the rest of chapter 28. If one – or a family, or a nation - rejects the Holy One, and chooses another way of life than the Divine Betrothal the Holy One has called us to, he or she – or that family or nation – cannot expect to be treated as a Bride-to-be.

The Trouble With Choosing Any Way But the Bridegroom’s Way

What one sees if he analyzes the ‘*ararim* spelled out in today’s aliyah is the equivalent of an *ever-tightening noose*. The Holy One binds *CORDS OF LOVINGKINDNESS* around all who come to Him and enter into covenant with Him. The closer we stay to the Holy One in the ‘lover’s dance’ of the Torah-submissive life, the looser the cords of lovingkindness feel. They are *warm and comfortable, and wonderful*. When one steps away from the Holy One, however, *the slack in the cords of the Holy One’s lovingkindness begins to disappear*. The farther one wanders away from the *sh’ma* pathway, and the longer one stays away, the tighter the cords of lovingkindness feel. They no longer feel warm, and comfortable, and wonderful. They chaff against our flesh. They seem like discipline. And the further we step away, and thus the harder we pull against the cords, the more limiting and restricting the cords become. That is how it works. The ‘giving over’ levels of discipline are actually *activated by our pulling against our Bridegroom-King’s cords of lovingkindness*.

Even the ‘giving over’ disciplines of the Holy One, however, are designed to be *redemptive* in nature, not punitive. The cords that we experience as discipline always remain at their essence *CORDS OF LOVINGKINDNESS*. The Holy One is not out to *destroy* or even *permanently injure* His unfaithful Bride. He is merely striving *to restore her to relationship*. He therefore lets her face the consequences of rejecting and walking away from Him. He doesn’t really do any of the things she experiences after walking away from the Garden Path to her – she *does it all to herself*. She could stop the discomfort at any moment, by turning around and running back to the Divine Bridegroom, rather than pulling farther and farther away. The ‘*ararim* of Deuteronomy 28:16 ff are therefore like what the Holy One spoke through *Hoshea* [Hosea]:

***Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns,
and I will build a wall against her, that she can't find her way.
She will follow after her lovers, but she won't catch them;***

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 28:14 is the source for this ‘left’/‘right’ analysis. That verse says: “*Do not stray yamin u’smol [to the right or left] from all the words that I am commanding you today.*”

*And she will seek them, but won't find them.
 Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband;
 For then was it better with me than now.'
 For she did not know that I gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil,
 And multiplied to her silver and gold which they used for Ba`al.
 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my new wine in its season,
 And will pluck away my wool and my flax, that should have covered her nakedness.
 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers,
 And no one will deliver her out of my hand.*

* * *

*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness
 and I will speak tenderly to her.
 I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of `Achor for a door of hope;
 And she will respond there, as in the days of her youth,
 And as in the day when she came up out of the land of Mitzrayim.
 It will be in that day, says the Holy One, that you will call me Ishi ['my husband,']
 And no longer call me Ba`ali ['my master.']
 [Hosea 2:8-16]*

There is Deliverance From The 'Curse'!

It has been said – and oft preached - that Messiah has taken away something our English Bibles translate as ‘*the curse of the Law*’. See **Galatians 3:3**. Quoting that singular vague statement from Galatians is a surefire ‘amen trigger’ – *i.e.* an emotionally-charged catchphrase that any struggling preacher can throw into a sermon to awaken a sleeping audience. But have you ever wondered what Shaul of Tarsus, a son of the Covenant, actually meant by the phrase ‘*the curse of the law*’? Have you wondered what it means that Messiah *redeemed us* [Hebrew, *ga'al*, meaning to effectuate kinsman redemption per Covenant protocols] *from* the ‘curse of the law’? He cannot mean that the wise instructions of the Creator for mankind – *i.e.* *Torah’s mitzvot, mishpatim, chukim, edut, mishmeret, etc.* – have now been rendered *obsolete* or *irrelevant*. The instructions of Torah as to how human life is to be lived for maximum enjoyment and impact constitute the Holy One’s *cords of lovingkindness*. What the taking away of the “‘curse’ of the law” means is simply that those who *sh’ma* Messiah, make *teshuvah*, and return to our Divine Bridegroom, *no longer have to feel chaffing from what in essence are cords of lovingkindness*. Having been restored to the garden path, and reawakened to their identity, mission, and destiny, they embrace those instructions as the precious cords of lovingkindness they are. They relax in them, and thereby begin to delight in them, rest in them, flow in syncopated rhythm with them, and thereby experience them only as *b’racha* – never as ‘*arar*. ‘*Arar*, you see, cannot infiltrate, and has no application to, either the garden path or the Divine Dance. If, as, when, and to the extent we are united with Messiah, flowing with Him in *mitzvot*, following His lead, and responding

to Him as a Bride on the garden path, His cords of lovingkindness feel warm, comfortable, and wonderful around us. To us, then, who are *united with and drawing ever closer to* Messiah, the ‘*arar* – the curse spoke of in Torah [specifically, in today’s aliyah] - is but a fading memory. No more curse. But still Torah – *the way it was intended to be*.

One Last Thing

Before we close the book on parsha *Ki Tavo*, there is *one more thing* I would like to share with you – one more nugget I want you to discover in this beautiful parsha. It is found in Deuteronomy 29:3, where Moshe says:

V’lo-natan Adonai lachem lev l’da’at

The Holy One did not give you a heart for intimate knowledge & relationship,

v’eynayim lir’ot v’oznayim lish’moa ad hayom hazeh

or eyes to see or ears to hear until this Day.

I do not know *where you, the reader, stand* this day in relation to your Divine Bridegroom. I do not know what *blind spots* you may have in your life, or what *troubles you may have had in hearing the Beautiful Voice of our Divine Bridegroom for yourself*. I do not know what *areas of coldness or offense* you may be feeling in your heart toward Him – or other human beings - as a result of things that have happened to you or people you love in the past. But this I know. It is the will – indeed the *passionate desire* – of the Holy One to heal all that THIS DAY. *This day*, Moshe declares, with the revelations of *this aliyah of Torah*, your Divine Bridegroom wants to give you three very special gifts.

First of all, He wants to give you ***lev l’da’at*** - a heart *ready for the understanding and perspective on life that comes through intimate knowledge of and relationship with Him*. It is only this kind of a heart with which you can love Him with *the way He deserves to be loved*.

Secondly, He wants to give you ***eynayim lir’ot*** – eyes *that re’eh*. These are the kind of eyes that *see the people around you - and the world at large through your Divine Bridegroom’s eternal perspective*. These are the only kind of eyes that can *see what the Father is doing*.

And finally, the Divine Bridegroom wants to give you perhaps *the most important gift of all*, ***oznayim lish’moa*** - *ears that are ready, willing and able to sh’ma His Voice*.

He that has *oznayim lish’moa - ears to sh’ma* - let him *sh’ma!* If you are *ready to receive these precious gifts of the Holy One* – if indeed you feel you *cannot*

go one more day without them, may I humbly suggest that you stop whatever you are doing at this moment. Turn off the television, the radio, the stereo, the mp3 player, your smart phone, and everything else. Close your eyes. Assume whatever posture of prayer you find most meaningful. Reach out your hands toward Heaven. And then *surrender - first your heart*, then your eyes, then your ears - to your Divine Bridegroom. Ask your Divine Bridegroom to take your heart of stone, and replace it with a *lev l'da'at* – a heart like Kalev had, to follow the Holy One wholeheartedly. Ask your Covenant Partner in Heaven to take your weak, myopic, critical natural eyes, and replace them with *eynayim lirot* – eyes like Avraham received that fateful day on Mount Moriyah. Ask the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov to take your dull, overstimulated natural ears, and replace them with *oznayim lish'moa* – ears like Sh'muel developed through years of service to Eli – ears that could hear the call of the Creator, and respond: “*Speak, Holy One, and your servant will sh'ma!* Then *be still*, and *wait upon your Divine Bridegroom*. When He shows Himself to you, grab hold of the hem of His garment, and then do not, under any circumstances, let Him go until He blesses you with possession of each of the precious gifts Moshe says He wants to give you this day. And now, if you will please excuse me, I have got some serious prayers of teshuvah of my own that I desperately need to speak in the Courts of my King.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's verses the Eternal One makes it clear that the covenant He has cut with mankind has a negative side - that with systematic unfaithfulness to any covenant undertaking comes *consequences*. If we refuse to walk the garden path with our Divine Bridegroom, we will leave the channel of the riverbed of life and will not enjoy the blessings of the betrothal.

[A] What reasons or circumstances or outside interests or influences could cause a person to willfully disobey the covenant of the Holy One to such an extent that the '*arar'im* [KJV 'curses'] of today's psukim would “come upon” and “overtake” him?

[B] Instead of being a blessing to and a beckoning light placed high above the nations, what are the Holy One's people in the sight of the nations when they are under the '*arar* that comes from forsaking the Holy One?

[C] According to verse 47 what is the major cause of the covenant of love and blessing turning into an '*arar*?

[D] According to verses 48-57 what does Moshe prophesy will happen to the nation of Israel if its people in future generations so act as to cause the blessing to turn into an '*arar*?

[E] In verse 58 what is the Hebrew word that our English Bibles translate as “law”? Looking up that word in Strong's and Gesenius. What is the Hebraic

meaning of that word, and how is it different from our American concept of “law”?

[F] Also in verse 58 there is a reference to something written. In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the Hebrew word our English Bibles have translated as “book”. Write the Hebrew word and describe the word picture it presents to us. What “book” do you think Moshe was talking about?

[G] When was the “book” about which Moshe was speaking written?

[H] There are two separate things mentioned by Moshe which, if done by the people of the Holy One, will result in plagues, sicknesses, crop failures, and other disasters. List the two things which, if done, will cause these bad things to happen to the Holy One’s people.

[I] Why do you think bad things will result from doing the two things listed in your response to subpart [H]?

2. Does the Holy One say that His people will be *totally eliminated* - cease to exist as a people - if they violate the covenant? Before you answer, however, read ahead to Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

3. Today we complete the reading of the 6th of the 7 *haftarot* of consolation. In today’s reading we find these promises to a dry, desolate land and an oppressed, ravaged people:

*The glory of Levanon shall come to you,
the fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will make the place of my feet glorious.*

*The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending to you;
and all those who despised you will bow themselves down at the soles of your feet;
and they shall call you “The city of the Holy One,
The Tziyon of the Holy One of Yisra'el”.*

*Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man passed through you,
I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.*

*You will also suck the milk of the nations, and will suck the breast of kings;
and you will know that I, the Holy One,
am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Ya`akov.*

*For brass I will bring gold and for iron I will bring silver,
and for wood brass, and for stones iron.
I will also make your officers shalom, and righteousness your ruler.*

*Violence will no more be heard in your land,
desolation nor destruction within your borders;
but you will call your walls Yeshu'ah [Salvation], and your gates Tehillah [Praise].*

*The sun will be no more your light by day;
neither for brightness shall the moon give light to you:
but the Holy One will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.*

*Your sun will no more go down, neither will your moon withdraw itself;
for the Holy One will be your everlasting light,
and the days of your mourning shall be ended.
Your people also shall be all righteous;
they will inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting,
the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.
The little one will become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation;
I, the Holy One, will hasten it in its time.*

According to this haftarah:

[A] What will the trees of Lebanon be used for at the time of the restoration of Israel?

[B] What will the sons of Israel be called by their former oppressors when Israel is restored to *b'racha* [covenant blessing]?

[C] When, in relation to what you have just read in the Torah, will the restoration of Israel's fortunes spoken of in verses 18-22 of Isaiah 60 take place?

[D] According to Deuteronomy 30:2, 6, and 10 what will have to happen for the fullness of the restoration spoken of in today's haftarah verses to occur?

[E] Of the things that have to happen for full restoration of Israel to take place, what things must the people do and what will the Holy One do?

[F] According to verse 18 what will the "walls" of restored Israel be called? Look this word up in Strong's and Gesenius; write the Hebrew word and a working definition.

[G] According to verse 18 what will the "gates" of restored Israel be called? Look this word up in Strong's and Gesenius; write the Hebrew word and a working definition

[H] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the Hebrew words translated "walls" and "gates"; write those Hebrew words and what you think is an good, working definition for each.

[I] According to verse 21 what will Israel's future generation be like?

[J] According to verse 21 why did the Holy One set Israel apart?

[K] According to verse 22 when will the restoration occur?

[L] Look at Acts 1:6-8. What does that tell you about the time of the restoration?

4. In today's concluding Apostolic Scripture reading for *Ki Tavo* Yeshua absolutely shocks His *talmidim* by revealing to them that the religious world they see around them, and which seems to dominate everything, is *temporary* – and is, in fact, *fast fading away*.

*As some were talking about the temple
and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts, he [Yeshua] 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 21:5-6]

All who have *oznayim lish'moa* - ears to *sh'ma* - then *Sh'ma!* Messiah says that the Temple, along with all Herod's beautiful Romanesque promenades, colonnades and courtyards and all the beautifully clothed high priests Rome has appointed and all the magnificent offering receptacles - indeed all the things which loom so imposingly before you and seem to define the way you experience religion - *will be whisked away in an instant.*

Yeshua warns the talmidim who are with Him – and I believe He warns us as well - not to put too much stock in any religious, political or economic system. Religious, political and economic systems, you see, have a way of fading away – crumbling from without and within – just when we think we need them most. Those who depend upon religious systems and cling to them are therefore always in danger, whether they know it or not, of being crushed by the collapse of the very structures to which they cling. The Word of the Holy One, on the other hand, ***endures forever. And the Name of the Holy One is a strong tower; the righteous run to It, and are safe.*** Proverbs 18:10.

[A] With what did the people of Yeshua's time see the Temple as being adorned?

[B] When people thought or spoke of the Temple (or Tabernacle), what was supposed to be the focus of their attention?

[C] Which was more important, what was on the outside of the Temple, or what was on the inside of it? Explain your answer.

[D] To whom did the comments about the things with which the Temple was adorned give glory, men or God?

[E] What does Yeshua prophesy will happen to the Temple that has been decorated with “goodly stones” and “gifts” [KJV]?

[F] Look up in Strong's the Greek word translated as “goodly stones” in Luke 21:5. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[G] In 70 C.E. the armies of Titus of Rome, son of Emperor Vespasian, destroyed Jerusalem. Read a historical account of this event in an Encyclopedia or other historical source. How did what Yeshua prophesied in the passage we read today come to pass?

*May you grow more and more familiar each day
with the beauty and delightful fragrance of the garden path
... and with the touch of the Bridegroom's Hand. Shabbat Shalom to each of you!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 32:8-9

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.
I will counsel you with my eye on you.
Don't be like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding,
Who are controlled by bit and bridle
or else they will not come near to you.*