

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayalech:*** **Deuteronomy 31:1-13**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 62:11- 63:6**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 7:7-8**

Be strong and courageous.

[Deuteronomy 31:6,7]

Today's Meditation is Job 42:1-6;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 5th Petition, *Rofei* [The Prayer for Healing]

Vayelech Moshe – And Moshe walked/went out as on a mission ... *vayedaber et-ha-devarim ha-eleh el-kol-Yisra'el* – and he spoke all these things unto all Israel. Deuteronomy 31:1.

Welcome to *Vayalech* - the *Parsha of Gathering Strength and getting activated for the Days to Come*. This section of Torah is always studied around the time of the Feast of Trumpet Blasts.

The Meaning of 'Vayalech'

Yalak - the Hebrew verb at the root of the phrase *Vayalech* - can refer to walking, crawling, running, or skipping. The essence of this verb is not the *form* of ambulation, but the *intentionality* of it. The key is breaking free, overcoming the crippling power of inertia, getting up, going, and engaging with the world.

Moshe is our example. He has been giving speeches long enough. He senses that his vanishing point is rapidly approaching, and he has a lot that he still wants to do. He thus gets up from the bema of learning and teaching and launches out on a tour the camp. As he goes, he give final exhortations to those who will succeed him in leadership roles. He knows that wherever we go, whatever we do, and in whatever generation we live in, at this time of changing seasons Creation will always bring his final public challenge – the exhortation to ‘choose life’ - back to our remembrance. He knows that every time the first cool mornings of pre-Autumn appear in the Northern Hemisphere, and every time the spring storms start to pop up in the Southern Hemisphere, we will hear the earth – and all its species - groaning in eager expectation for the sons of the Holy One awaken, arise, return to the Pathway the Bridegroom has blazed for His Bride-People². He knows that this

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² The Bridegroom's Pathway - the narrow road He has blazed for His model nation to display His Goodness and Shalom – is none other that the ‘Torah’ He delivered to us through Moshe. It is the deep channel of wisdom and revelation in the midst of which the King's Life-Breath flows like water.

time of year our studies in Torah and the stirrings of the Creation ecosystem will demand our answer to the ultimate challenge. The pendency of the ‘choose life’ challenge will add a sense of urgency to the *shofar* blasts of *Yom T’ruah*, to our observance of *Yom Kippur*, and to our taking in hand of the myrtle, the palm, the willow and the citron on the first day of *Chag ha-Sukkot*.

You see, Beloved, ‘choose life’ is the essential theme of the seventh Biblical month. It is completely right that the ‘choose life’ challenge be weighing heavily on our minds as we begin our studies in *Vayalech*. May each of us approach this study and this season in a spirit of *t’shuvah* [return]. May our gaze be fixed upon our Divine Bridegroom. May adoration of Him infuse our souls with new life. May we surrender our members again to His Precious Gift of Torah. And may this be the season when we embark afresh on the pathway to the destiny and purpose for which we were created!

Moshe Models the Departure Theme For Us

As the parsha opens Torah wants us to understand that Moshe is no longer standing at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting addressing the assembled masses – he is making a farewell tour through the camp, tying up loose ends, and saying his good-byes. He begins by declaring:

Ben-me'ah v'esrim shanah anochi hayom

I am one hundred twenty years old this day;

lo-uchal od latzet v'lavo

I can no more go out and come in.

[Deuteronomy 31:2]

Physically, mentally, and spiritually Moshe was *as strong as ever*. His strength had not waned in any respect. So what did he mean by declaring ***I can no more go out and come in?*** He meant simply that *the time for his departure was at hand*. Moshe was explaining that with the ‘choose life’ challenge delivered, *his task on earth was now complete*. He was announcing that *the time for his departure from the ‘ordinary’ realm had finally come*. He was graduating to the true *Mish’kan* – the glorious eternal one after which the finite replica at the center of the Camp of the Redeemed had been patterned. The man who spoke with the Bridegroom-King *al-P’nei* [face-to-Face], as a man speaks to his friend, knew that when he ‘went out’ [*Vayalech*] this time, was fine with the fact that he would never again either speak to the great assembly at the door to the Tent of Meeting or return to worldly comforts of his own personal tent.

What will Moshe do in his last hours? Knowing the sands of time allotted for his earthly life are rapidly slipping away, he decides to take a final tour around the camp of the Redeemed. He wants to go out a ‘giver’. He wants to impart precious,

eternal gifts of love to mankind. What gifts does he have in mind? First of all, he will give us one final mitzvah – *i.e.* the *mitzvah* of *ha-khel*. He will then impart the gift of apostolic authority to Y’hoshua. He will then deliver completed copies of the precious scrolls of Torah he has written in his own hand [a] to the kohanim, for them to put in the ark, and [b] to the heads of each tribe, for them to keep with them at all times, and pass down to their sons and sons’ sons. He will then lift his voice and sing over us a prophetic ‘song of the ages’ – an anthem that will later be known simply as ‘the Song of Moshe’. He will then lift his voice and impart a final prophetic blessing over one tribe at a time. His last few precious moments of physical life will then be spent alone with his dearest Friend – the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov.

Moshe Introduces the Theme of His Farewell Tour:

V’imtzu al-tir’u [Be strong; Have No Fear]

The first thing Moshe does after ‘going out’ of his tent on the day of his death is to remind every man, woman, and child that their destiny lies across the Jordan River - in the Land the Holy One had promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov, and their seed forever. He wants them to understand that soon they will hear a *shofar* telling them it is time to cross the River, enter into the Land, and dispossess the Kena’ani who had been polluting that land with innocent blood and perversion. He wants them to know that the Kena’ani have no intention of leaving. He wants us to know that that the cities of the Kena’ani are fortified. He wants us to be aware that they have large, powerful armies. He wants us to know that in our confrontations they will always have every possible natural advantage on their side. They will occupy the high ground. They will have far superior numbers. They will also have more sophisticated types of weaponry. But Moshe also wants to make it clear that none of those things matters one whit – because we serve a mighty God. Against all odds, the Divine mandate of possession of the Land will be fulfilled. As he puts it:

Adonai Eloheicha hu over l’faneicha

The Holy One your God, He will go over before you;

hu-yash’mid et-ha-goyim ha-eleh milefaneicha v’rishtam

He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them:

Y’hoshua hu over l’faneicha

[and] Y’hoshua, he will go over before you,

ka’asher diber Adonai

as the Holy One has spoken.

V’asah Adonai lahem ka’asher asah l’Sichon ul’Og

The Holy One will do to them as he did to Sichon and to `Og,

malchei ha-Emori ul'art'zam asher hishmid otam
the kings of the Amori, and to their land; whom he destroyed.

Unetanam Adonai lifneichem

The Holy One will deliver them up before you,

v'asitem lahem k'chol-ha-mitzvah

and you are to do to them according to all the mitzvah

asher tziviti etchem chizku v'imtzu al-tir'u

With which I have enjoined you. Be strong and do not fear

v'al-ta'artzu mipneihem

don't be afraid, nor be scared of them:

ki Adonai Eloheicha hu ha-holech imach

for the Holy One your God, He it is who goes with you;

lo yarpeicha v'lo ya'azveika

He will not fail you, nor forsake you.

[Deuteronomy 31:3-6]

Let's break down these prophetic declarations one by one.

Prophetic Declaration #1:

The Holy One Will ... Go Before You

The critical first wave of any assault is always the one most fraught with danger. The first boots on the enemy's territory are always the ones at the greatest risk. The advance forces absolutely must be strong, wise, disciplined, and fearless if a campaign is to be effective. Not to worry. The Holy One will Himself be the advance force. He will personally take up Sword and Shofar and establish every beachhead we will need for the campaign.

Just as with the Egyptians it was the Holy One Who threw the horse and the rider into the sea, so it will be with the Kena'ani. As we sang prophetically on the Eastern shore of the Sea of Reeds after the great deliverance of that day, so we will sing again: ***The Holy One is a man of war; the Holy One is His name Your right hand, O Holy One, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Holy One, has dashed the enemy in pieces.*** Exodus 15:3.

If the Holy One does not go before us, we are not to go. But if He goes before us, we can be assured He will clear the way for us to follow.

Prophetic Declaration #2:

The Holy One will ... Destroy the Nations Before You

The battle for the Promised Land is ultimately our Bridegroom-King's battle, not ours. He is the One Who promised this land to our Fathers, knowing full well the

Kena'ani had no intention of leaving voluntarily, no matter how many encouragements He gave them to do so. He has had this entire campaign planned out to the last detail since the foundation of the world. He has poured the counsel of Heaven into the wisest of strategies. He has chosen the perfect timing. He has orchestrated everything from the weather to the phase of the moon. He will lead the charge – and He will **destroy** – Hebrew *shamad*, meaning to *lay waste to and exterminate* – every single serpent-controlled soul who refuses to either run away at the sound of His Shofar or tremble in fear at His Presence and humbly surrender to His Will.

This is personal. His honor is at stake. His promises to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov - and to us – hinge upon this. This is not a theological battle. This is not an argument over doctrine or beliefs. Unlike the battles men choose to fight, this is not even a battle over morality, over 'good' and 'evil, or over 'right' and 'wrong'. This battle is to *secure the Homeland of the Messiah*. This battle is to *prepare a Bridal Chamber for His Bride*. This battle is to *establish a command, communications, and operations center for the invasion of earth by Heaven*. This battle is thus an *essential component of the Creator's Long-Range Plan of Redemption for Mankind and the Restoration of Creation to its intended Edenic State*.

The Promise of the Land for His Beloved to use as a headquarters from which to model His righteousness to the nations and to teach His Wisdom, His Will, and His Ways to the world is non-negotiable. He is therefore not only going to lead the first charge of this essential confrontation – He is going to fight this battle all the way to its conclusion. We are not here to conquer anybody or anything – we are just here to serve as His adoring throng of Awestruck Witnesses, His humble and eternally grateful cleanup crew, His loyal Palace Guards, and His Official Kingdom Diplomats and Spokespersons. That is the way it is with all His battles. That is why we must never allow each other to think too highly of ourselves – or ever even think about putting our trust in our own strength, in numbers, in plans, programs and strategies hatched in the human brain, in the seductive sophistication of weaponry and armaments, in earthly allies, or indeed in anything or any One besides Him.

Prophetic Declaration #3:

The Holy One will ... Do to Them as He did to Sichon and Og

The Holy One has already shown us what His battles look like – and how they turn out for His enemies. The pattern is established in the wars with Sichon and Og, the Emori kings who attacked us viciously when we sought to pass peacefully through the land of Moav. The first of these prototypical enemies - *Sichon* - refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory. Moshe has explained to us that the Holy

One actually *hardened Sichon's spirit and made his heart obstinate* in order that He might deliver him into our hand. **Deuteronomy 2:30**. Sichon attacked us on the plain, and the Holy One delivered him over to us and gave us his land. The second of these prototypical enemies – *Og the giant* – also came out with an army intent on destroying Israel. But the Holy One told Moshe ***“Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you are to do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites.”*** **Deuteronomy 3:2**. And sure enough the Holy One delivered Og, with all his people, into the hand of Israel, who continued to attack his army until he had no survivors remaining, then took possession of his land.

We do not have to redesign the wheel. The Holy One has showed us exactly how this is going to work.

Prophetic Declaration #4:

The Holy One ... goes with you, and He will not leave you nor forsake you.

The Holy One will be not only be our benefactor as we go forward on the Pathway of Life, He promises to be both our *guide* and our *constant companion*. If we choose the Bridegroom-King's narrow but beautiful pathway there will never be even one moment when we are alone, left to our own devices, or dependent upon our own strength. He will be ***with us***. And if you want to know what the **'withness'** of the Holy One looks like, consists of, and might mean in your life, just ask *Yosef* [see **Genesis 39:3, 21-23**] and *Sh'muel* [see **I Samuel 3:19**] and *David* [see **II Samuel 5:10**] and *Sh'lomo* [see **I Chronicles 1:1**] and *Asa* [see **II Chronicles 15:8-9**] and *Yochanan the Immerser* [see **Luke 1:66**] and *Yeshua* [see **Acts 10:38**]

Our King is a ***Jealous*** as well as ***Zealous*** Bridegroom. He will not let us out of either His *Sight* or His *Presence*. He will not ask us to do anything independent of Him. He recognizes, as Yeshua taught, ***I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; but without Me you can do nothing.*** **John 15:5**. He will not leave us twisting in the wind. Ever. Period. End of story. Choose life – and you will get the not only the *Creator of Life*, but all things that appertain to life. That includes, without limitation, the *Breath of life*, the *Tree of Life*, the *River of Life*, and as we will discover later in this very study, the *Book of Life*.

***Okay - So the Holy One Will not Leave or Forsake Us;
But Will We Have a MAN, Like Moshe, to Speak His Words to Us,
And Mediate With Him on our Behalf?***

Moshe has been pouring out streams of revelation to us for many, many years. But alas, the prototypical prophet of the Bridegroom-King's allotted time on earth is

drawing to a close. His days of leading the nation are almost at an end. No, the son of Amram and Yocheved has not fallen ill. No, he is not the target of an assassination attempt. He is by no means going to become the victim of a terrorist attack. Nor will he fall prey to a beast of the night or the plot of an adversary. The prophet is not even going to find himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. His health will not fail. His strength will not abate. Neither his eyes nor his ears nor his limbs will suffer deterioration. Why, then, will he leave us? It is simple. His work on earth is almost done. The climax of his mission came last week, in parsha *Nitzavim*, when he finally uttered the words that his heart had longed for decades to say, namely: ***I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live, and that you may love the Holy One your God, that you may sh'ma His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days.*** Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

Having laid down the ultimate challenge to every human being who would ever be born, Moshe's leg of the great relay race of the Bridegroom-King's Grand Redemptive Plan is almost complete. The only questions now are who will take the baton for the next leg of the great race – and how will the prototypical prophet of Israel's legacy be passed on to posterity.

Preparing for Departure

Almost four decades ago, at Mount Sinai, Moshe had left the camp of the Redeemed hastily, with little preparation or explanation. The people who followed him out of bondage in Egypt did not handle his absence well at all. They had chosen, on the day of the Great Betrothal to make him – Moshe - their sole point of connection with the Holy One. When he left, they therefore immediately experienced a sense of prophetic disconnection. Their spiritual cell phones suddenly had no service. Their spiritual *Wi-Fi* hot spot was suddenly unavailable. They grew restless. They were uncertain about their future. And the vast hierarchy of '*leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers*' that Moshe had painstakingly appointed at Yitro's suggestion were simply not up for the task assigned to them. Neither was Aharon. Neither was anyone else. The people felt cut off - from not only the sweet revelation stream they had been experiencing, but from the Bridegroom-King Himself. They saw themselves as being in a perfect storm of a missing prophet, an invisible God, and the absence of any effective human leaders they could trust. The result, of course, was the infamous golden calf debacle.

Oy veh! Moshe wants to make sure that nothing like that happens again! This time before he leaves he wants the people to know that everything is under control – i.e. that there is a well thought-out and carefully scripted Divine plan in place.

Moshe wants to reassure everyone that *the Holy One does not work through him alone*. He wants them to know that the Holy One is not to ever be thought of as his God, but as their God, and that the Covenant under which the Grand Redemptive Plan is going forward is not his Covenant, but is theirs, their children's, and children's children's forever. He wants them to know that it is good for them that he goes away. '*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*', he basically said. He wants them to know that the Holy One will provide them *another comforter*. *You do not need me*, Moshe wanted to scream. *You have a covenant with the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and Ya'akov!* He will be true to His Covenant! He is your strength! He will always be with you. He is for you. He will always be there for you! He will not abandon you! He will not leave you defenseless! He will not leave you comfortless! He will not forsake you!

Do you understand these things, Dear Reader? Do you understand that you also have a covenant with the Holy One your God? Do you understand that He has committed to be your King, your Defender, and your Kinsman-Redeemer forever? Do you understand that He watches over you? Do you understand that He neither slumbers nor sleeps? Do you understand that He gives his angels charge over you? Do you understand that He will always be there for you? Do you understand that He will never leave you, never abandon you, never forsake you, and never for a moment leave you defenseless or comfortless? Are these precious promises more than just words on a page to you? Do you know the One Who made the promises? Do you know the His Voice? Do you know the sweetness of His touch? Take a few moments and just let Him confirm all these things to you!

He Will Provide Another Comforter

This time Moshe wants there to be no question about what human leader is the Holy One's choice to assume the position when he is gone. He doesn't want a prophetic disconnect to take place. He does not want to leave a power vacuum – or room for a power struggle. He did not choose Y'hoshua as the next human being to lead Israel – the Holy One did. But he is one hundred percent on board. And so, we are told:

***Then Moshe called Y'hoshua, and said to him in the sight of all Israel,
"Chazak! [i.e. Be strong by being bound together (with the Holy One)]***

V'ematz! [i.e. be swift to and bold for the battle].

***For you are to go with this people to the land
that the HOLY ONE has sworn to their fathers to give them,
and you are to cause them to inherit it.***

***And the HOLY ONE, He is the One who goes before you.
He will be with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you;
do not fear nor be dismayed.***

The Prophetic Empowerments of Y'hoshua: Chazak v'ematz

Calling Forth a Deliverer

The next thing the Holy One has Moshe do before paying his last respects to each of the tribes is to publicly commission his successor. Please remember that Moshe did not choose his successor. That choice was made – and announced by - the Eternal One long ago. The details of that Divine announcement were memorialized way back in chapter 27 of the Book of Numbers. In the 18th verse of that chapter the Holy One instructed Moshe who he was to lay hands upon and commission to lead the Redeemed Community into *Eretz Yisrael*. This was in partial fulfillment of the Eternal One’s promise to *Yosef* [Joseph] – in his controversial dream – that *he* [Yosef] would lead his brothers. Y’hoshua, you see, was a descendant of Efrayim – one of Yosef’s sons.

What happened in the lives of the patriarchs is by the Eternal One’s decree destined to be repeated over and over again throughout history in the lives of their descendants. Get to know the historical narratives of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers very well, Beloved! They repeat and amplify themselves over and over, forming an ever-widening circle of ripples on the face of history. They constitute the prophetic wallpaper for *your story and mine* – and for the stories of all our children and children’s children in all generations. To the Eternal One, you see, Who lives outside of what we know as ‘time’, history and prophecy are simply two different sides of the same coin. Torah tells us therefore that on the final day of his fleshly life Moshe called *Y’hoshua* [Joshua], son of Nun, apart from the rest of the assembled masses and charged him ‘*in the sight of all Israel*’. The opening words of that charge were: ***Chazak v'ematz*** - *i.e. be strong and of good courage*.

Before Moshe tells Y’hoshua what he is to do – *i.e.* what tasks he is to perform – he does something very important. He prophetically empowers him with words of blessing. This is the way it almost always works in the Kingdom of our Bridegroom. He almost always provides empowerments before he gives assignments. And He almost always releases empowerments through prophetic words of blessing. Let’s look at the two prophetic words of blessing Moshe releases over the son of Nun.

1. Chazak!

Moshe’s ‘*chazak*’ empowerment of Y’hoshua is usually translated into English as ‘*be strong*’. *Be strong*? Is that supposed to be a ‘*commandment*’ – or is it supposed to be an *empowerment*, like the Holy One’s ‘*Light, Be!*’ and/or His ‘*Be Holy as I am holy!*’ declarations? Of course, it is the latter. But does *chazak* really just mean ‘*be strong*’? Or is it more definitive than that? The Hebrew verb ***chazak*** literally means to bind or wrap things together. It is to increase strength, freedom of movement, swiftness, and impact by tightening up things that are loose and/or by combining things that are separate into a homogenous whole. Think of the English

phases ‘gird up your loins’, ‘roll up your sleeves’, ‘batten down the hatches’, and ‘get it together’. The idea is that strength – and success in any venture - come from binding/banding things and people together. With whom is Y’hoshua to bind himself for strength? In the first instance, it is the Bridegroom-King Himself. He is to unite his heart, his mind, his thoughts, his words, his actions and reactions, and his will with the Holy One’s. He is to abide in Him – the way a branch abides in the vine from which it grows. In Him he is to live, and move, and have his being. And then he is to cause others – those he mentors directly, and those he just leads and inspires – to abide in him the way he abides in the Holy One. That is strength. That is what it will take for Y’hoshua – or for us – to be truly strong.

2. *Ematz!*

*Moshe’s second verb of empowerment – ematz – is usually translated into English as ‘Be bold/very courageous’ Be bold/ very courageous? Is that supposed to be an order – or is it supposed to be a blessing, like the Holy One’s ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’ declaration? Of course, it is the latter. But does the verb really just mean ‘be bold/very courageous’? Or is there more to it than that in the language Moshe – and the Holy One - employed? Ematz literally means to be swift and run to the assigned task or battle. It takes courage, of course, but it is more than having courage. It is a very active, engaged form of courage. It is all about getting to the task at hand. It means not delaying, not analyzing, and not equivocating. Compare what B’nei Yisrael did in connection with the whole spy debacle – studying, considering, weighing factors of relativity, probability, and feasibility as they saw them, and then panicking - with what David did when Goliath advanced against him. ***When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.*** I Samuel 17:48. David eschewed delay. He made his feet swift. He ran to the battle. That is *ematz*. There is a time for careful thought, consideration, and analysis, of course – but that time is not when the task has already been assigned, and awaits only one to perform it. Some things – indeed, the most important things in the Kingdom - must be done against the odds, irrespective of any probabilities and feasibilities the human mind could conjure up. Sometimes the Philistine is coming - with mayhem on his mind and a life, a household, or a generation at stake. When that happens, it is time not time to think about the options; it is time to put our faith in the Holy One and the lessons of life and skills the Holy One has taught us to date, and to run to meet and engage the Philistine. The odds and probabilities and feasibilities do not matter in such a case. We just have to keep our head, stay focused on the objective, fight through the tension and the pain, and trust the Holy One with the outcome. ***Chazak v’ematz***, Dear One!*

The Tasks to Which Y’hoshua Was Assigned

Moshe gave Y’hoshua two separate assignments in today’s aliyah. First, he told

him that he was to *'go with this people to the land'*. Then, he was to *'cause them to inherit it'*. Y'hoshua was not to act like a Lone Ranger. He was to go WITH this people. Even if they rebelled. Even if they were afraid. Even if they spoke negatively about him or behaved badly toward them. Even if he did not like them. He was to consider himself *of, for, and part of* the people, not in any wise above or separate from – much less *better than* – anyone else. This was not to be about him or about his ministry. It was not to be about his beliefs or his opinions. It was not to be a matter of agreeing on matters of theology, ideology, or even *halakah*. It was to be about the Covenant the Holy One made with all sons and daughters of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov and about the Holy One's Grand Redemptive Plan for the entire species of mankind. It was to be about nothing else. There is, you see, no room for self-advancement, self-promotion, or self-interest in the Kingdom of Heaven. There is no room for tribalism, clannishness, cronyism, or cliques in the Kingdom, either. There is no brand or label or title that we are to cling to but the King's brand, the King's label, and the King's title. No leader in the Redeemed Community can possibly succeed in any meaningful way in the enterprises of the Kingdom by promoting his or her own, or his or her tribe's or movement's, agenda or interests. It is a Kingdom that the Holy One is establishing, and it is only the King's interests that we are to promote and advance. We are not to promote any man's, movement's or organization's agenda or interests.

The Second task assigned to Y'hoshua, after *going with* the people, was to *cause the people of Israel to inherit the land*. This would turn out to be Y'hoshua's most significant challenge. It would take him the rest of his life. All other priorities would have to be subordinated to this one. It was not just himself and his family he was to cause to inherit the land. It was not just his own tribe of Menashe he was to cause to inherit it. It was every man, every family, of every clan, and of every tribe. Some would be more cooperative and helpful than others – it did not matter. His job was not over until every single family of every single tribe was established in the next phase of Covenant life. That is what leadership in the Kingdom is all about, Dear One. That is why the empowerment for every position of leadership in the Community of the Redeemed must be supernatural empowerment. Education is never enough. Skill is never enough. Charisma is never enough. The favor of the rich and the powerful is never enough. All those wrapped together would still be woefully insufficient. Only the Holy One's Breath – His Ruach HaQodesh – working through and with His Words of Torah – can advance the Kingdom of Heaven's agenda on earth. Receive the Breath of the Holy One afresh, Dear One! Be empowered from on high! And do not stop – or allow yourself to be distracted by anything else - until every person the Holy One places within your sphere of influence has been established in the next phase of Covenant life.

It should be kept in mind that Y'hoshua is given to us to establish the *Messianic pattern*. His strength was to come from the fact that his will was completely subordinated to the Holy One's Will. As it was only through **Y'hoshua's Torah-submissive leadership** that the Redeemed Community of his day was able to obtain their inheritance, so it is through Yeshua and His abiding presence that we are able to inherit the things of the Holy One. It is through and in Yeshua alone that we can walk out Torah for the world to see. And that is exactly as the Holy One planned and ordained it.

Moshe's Hand-Written Sefer Torah - and Ha-K'hal!

We have known for some time now that, unlike 99% of the men who lived in his time, Moshe was literate. He could *read*. He could *write*. Being raised in the household of a Pharaoh instead of in slave's quarters had assured that. There is a *Romans 8:28 road* of opportunity running through every traumatic season any human being will ever face, and it was very evident with regard to the life of Moshe. The Holy One very clearly worked the traumatic events and circumstances of his early life together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. You know He will do the same for you, Dear One.

We first learned of Moshe's writing skills back at Refidim. After the first great battle in the war with Amalek was won, we were told: ***The Holy One said to Moshe, Write this for a memorial in the book ...*** *Hmmmmn*. Not only is Moshe a writer – it appears that He has specifically been chosen to be *the authorized biographer of the Creator of the Universe*. We should have realized at that time that we were in for something very, very special with Moshe. Then, at Mount Sinai, after *Matan ha-Torah* we read: ***And Moshe wrote all the words of the Holy One. Exodus 24:4a.*** Talk about an *instant classic of literature!*

In *Sefer Bamidbar* we learned that not only did Moshe write down everything the Holy One instructed him to for posterity, he also kept a journal of every place we camped in the course of our journey to freedom. **Numbers 33:2**. Later this week we will learn that Moshe is a writer of songs as well as sacred literature. The psalter indicates Moshe wrote at least one psalm. **Psalm 90**. Today we learn that, in addition to all that before he died Moshe sat down and wrote “all of the Torah” in readable script for all future generations to treasure and study, constituting it as the ‘Book of Life’. What a gift! What a legacy! As Torah records it:

V'yich'tov Moshe et-ha-torah hazot

Moshe wrote this Torah,

V'yitnah el-ha-kohanim b'nei Levi

and delivered it to the Kohanim the sons of Levi,

ha-nose'im et-aron b'rit Adonai
who bore the ark of the covenant of the Holy One,

v'el-kol-zik'nei Yisra'el
and to all the Zakenim of Yisra'el.
[Deuteronomy 31:9]

Oh how I would love to see Moshe's *sefer Torah*! Oh to see the words of Torah inscribed in the Holy Tongue *with the prophet's own hand*! May the original scroll be found, in our day! In the meantime, however, we have trustworthy copies made over the generations by multitudes of meticulous and faithful copyists. And the copies of Torah we have tell us that after writing the Torah Moshe charged the persons who would be responsible for disseminating the knowledge of the Ways of the Bridegroom-King among the masses – i.e. the ***kohanim*** [Aharonic priests] and the ***zakenim*** [tribal leaders/elders] - to do something very special with the scrolls he delivered to their care.

The Final Mitzvah Moshe Has To Teach Us – HaKhel

As part of his final charge to the Priests and the Elders, Moshe outlines the final *mitzvah* of Torah. This *mitzvah*, which in Hebrew tradition is called *Ha-khel* [i.e. the called gathering, or called assembly], is connected to – and connects - the *mitzvah* of making pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles [see especially Exodus 34:22, Leviticus 23:34 ff, Deuteronomy 16:13-16] and the *mitzvah* of *sh'mittah*, the year of release [see especially Exodus 23:10-11 and Deuteronomy 15:1-2]. When you consider that in the latter days of the Holy One's Grand Redemptive Plan for Creation it is ordained that ***everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Holy One of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles***, one can see how important not to the nations, as well as the Hebrew people, this *mitzvah* is destined to be. Something very, very special is supposed to happen at the Feast of Tabernacles every seventh year – continuing all the way into the Messiah's glorious millennial reign.

The *kohanim* and *zakenim* were charged with the responsibility of calling all participants in the Covenant together every occurrence of the *Feast of Tabernacles* [Chag ha-Sukkot] for a *public reading of the entire Scroll of Torah* [climaxing, of course, with the '*uvacharta b'chay'im*' – 'choose life' – challenge of parsha *Nitzavim*]. As Moshe put it:

Miketz sheva shanim
At the end of [every] seven years,
b'mo'ed shnat ha-sh'mitah b'chag ha-Sukot
in the set time of the year of release, at the feast of Tabernacles,

B'vo chol-Yisra'el l'ra'ot et-p'nei Adonai Eloheicha
when all Yisra'el is come to appear before the Holy One your God

b'makom asher yivchar
in the place which he shall choose,

tikra et-ha-torah hazot neged kol-Yisra'el b'ozneihem
you are to read this Torah before all Yisra'el in their hearing.

Wow! A public reading of *the entire Torah*! Can you imagine? And lest you think Torah is just to be read to a few priests and zealots with time on their hands, read on! Moshe's last '*mitzvah*' [instruction as to how to connect the people with the Holy One] in the Torah spells out just who is to be summoned for this once-every-seven-years public reading:

Ha-k'hel et-ha-am ha-anashim v'ha-nashim v'hataf
Assemble [Hebrew, *ha-k'hal*] *the people, the men and the women and the little ones,*

v'gercha asher bish'areicha
and your foreigner who is within your gates,

l'ma'an yishmei'u ul'ma'an yil'meidu
that they may hear, and that they may learn,

v'yar'u et-Adonai Eloheichem v'shameiru la'asot
and fear the Holy One your God and observe [Hebrew *sh'mar*] *to do* [Hebrew *asah*]

et-kol-divrei ha-torah hazot
all the words of this Torah;

Uveneihem asher lo yad'u yishmei'u
and that their children, who have not known, may hear [Hebrew, *sh'ma*]

v'lameidu l'yir'ah et-Adonai Eloheichem
and learn to fear the Holy One your God,

kol-ha-yamim asher atem chayim al-ha-adamah
as long as you live in the land

asher atem overim et-ha-Yarden shamah l'rishtah
that you are going over the Yarden (i.e. Jordan River) to possess.

[Deuteronomy 31:9-13]

The seven-year reading of Torah to every man, woman, and child, in Jerusalem is a *mitzvah* of extreme importance. The *mitzvah* of ***Ha-K'hal*** is very likely what – or a large part of what – the writer of Hebrews was referring to when he said the words we translate into English as “*forsake not the assembling of yourselves together*”. Hebrews 10:25³.

³ Thus far we have only found the Greek translation of the Hebrew language original. In the Greek translation, the word translated into English as “assembling” is *episunogoge*, Strong's Greek word #1997,

We have already learned that the land of Israel is to lie fallow and that debts owed by one Hebrew to another to be released every seventh year, or *sh'mittah*. But Moshe wants to know there is one more thing that is to characterize that year. Debts will be released, and indentured servants will be let sent out with provisions for the future, and that will bring great joy. But the Holy One wants us to know that there is a far greater freedom available through Covenant with Him than either freedom from debt or freedom from indentured servanthood. The ultimate freedom a man can experience is the freedom to learn and become who His creator designed him to be. So Moshe enjoins us that in the *sh'mittah* year, at the most joyful season, when men from all nations come up to worship the Holy One at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Torah is to be read aloud. Every man, woman, and child who comes is to hear the joyful sound of the love letter of the Creator of the Universe has written to mankind read aloud. Some who hear will be Hebrews. Some who hear will be Gentiles. **Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 60:3-14; Isaiah 66:23; Zechariah 8:20-13; and Zechariah 14:16-17.** All will stand together in awe, in the city of Jerusalem, on Temple Mount, and feast on the most beautiful and empowering words that have ever been spoken. In a year when the land lies fallow and grain is not harvested, we will hear the truth that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Holy One.

Keep in mind also that Solomon's dedication of the Temple took place in this time frame, so it is to be expected that the third or millennial temple will be dedicated and inaugurated during the Feast of Tabernacles as well.

Appearing Before the Holy One Your God

In the first six years only the men of Israel are required to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. But in the seventh year – the year of release – the women and children of Israel are required to travel to Jerusalem as well. Why? Because when they get to Jerusalem for the Feast in that special year, something very, very important is to happen. Let's let Moshe explain:

Miketz sheva shanim [i.e. at the end of seven years],
*at the appointed time in the year of release [Hebrew, sh'mittah], at the Feast of Tabernacles,
when all Israel comes to appear before the Holy One your God
in the place which He chooses*
[Deuteronomy 31:10-11]

pronounced *ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay'*. This verb is used only one other time in the apostolic scriptures - in **II Thessalonians 2:1** Shaul says: **"Brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Y'shua the Messiah, and our gathering together [episunogoge] to him, we ask you not to be quickly shaken in your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by letter as from us, saying that the day of Messiah had come."** It thus cannot be speaking of 'meeting' of people together [like a modern so-called 'worship service'], but of a Divine Appointment at which people are called to appear before Messiah [to whom the Holy One has appointed judgment – see **John 5:27**].

What does it mean to ‘appear before the Holy One your God’? The first reference to such a thing is in Exodus 23:17. There the Holy One Himself told us: *Three times in the year all your males are to appear before* [Hebrew *y’ra’eh el-p’nei*] *the Lord, the Holy One*⁴. In English, of course, to ‘appear before the Holy One your God’ could be interpreted simply to mean to go up to Jerusalem, to Temple Mount, where the Holy One has consented to abide. But *y’ra’eh el-p’nei* is a Hebrew phrase, not an English one. And *el-p’nei* means before the Face. *Y’ra’eh* means to be seen. What the Hebrew phrase is talking about is coming before the Holy One the way a sheep comes to its shepherd’s extended rod, and passes under it for an intimate inspection. It means to bow in humble submission, and yield your most tender areas to His inspection, touch, and decree. How long has it been since you did that, Dear One? How long has it been since you appeared before the Holy One your God?

Why Jerusalem?

Moshe does not mention Jerusalem by name – at least not in so many words. That should not be too surprising, since Moshe was born and lived his entire life in exile. He has never seen Jerusalem. Indeed, when he lived, there was no city called ‘Jerusalem’. There was Salem, the dwelling of Melki-Tzedek, but the name Jerusalem was not yet given. What Moshe does tell us is regarding the location of *HaKhel* is that it is to take place *in only one place - the place which the Holy One chooses*. What does that mean? The concept of the Holy One choosing a place [Hebrew *makom*] of national assembly – i.e. a capital for His earthly Kingdom - is introduced in Deuteronomy 12. There the *makom* is specified as the only authorized location for the altar at which the *korbanot* of the Covenant are to be presented. See Deuteronomy 12:5-6, 11, and 21. A little later in *Sefer D’varim* the *makom* is identified as also being [a] *the exclusive place to which the tithe of the land is to be taken and delivered to the kohen* in the first and second years of each tithing cycle [See Deuteronomy 14:23-24], [b] *the exclusive place where the Paschal lamb is to be slain* [see Deuteronomy 16:2 and 6], [c] *the place where the celebration of Shavuot is to occur* [see Deuteronomy 16:11], and [d] *the place to which first fruits are to be taken* [see Deuteronomy 26:2].

When the *Mish’kan* [Tabernacle of the Wilderness] stood, wherever it was located – at the entrance to the structure – served as the *makom*. That is where all assemblies of the people were convened. See e.g. Exodus 29:11.42; Leviticus 4:4;8:3-4 14,11.23; and 16:7. It was not until the possession of the full extent of the Land was at long last finalized under David and Solomon that a fixed place for the

⁴ The three appointed times for all men to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, of course, are 1. *Pesach* [Passover] in the Spring, 2. *Shavuot* [the Feast of Weeks, often called Pentecost] in the early Summer, and 3. *Sukkot* [Tabernacles] in the Fall.

avodah of the Holy One could be established. First David caused the ark of the Covenant to be brought to Jerusalem; then Solomon had the Temple of the Holy One constructed there. From that time forward Jerusalem – and specifically Temple Mount - became the *makom*. In II Chronicles 6:6 the Holy One says specifically: ***I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there.*** Moreover, in Zechariah 3:2 the Holy One tells ha-Satan: ***The Holy One who has chosen Jerusalem rebukes you!*** A king needs a capital from which to reign; Jerusalem is unquestionably the chosen capital of the Bridegroom-King.

According to Moshe, what is the purpose of reading the Torah? It is *that they [i.e. those who read and hear the reading] may sh'ma and that they may learn to fear the Holy One your God and sh'ma all the words of this Torah, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Holy One your God.*

What Does the Mitzvah of HaKhel Have to Do with the Themes of Sukkot?

The Feast of Tabernacles is first introduced to the world in Exodus 34:22. There it is called ‘the Feast of Ingathering **at the turn of the year**’. The timing of the Feast on the agricultural calendar is thus ***after the final ingathering*** of one agricultural year and ***before preparation for planting the first grain crops for the next agricultural year.*** The primary theme of the Feast is the absolute goodness of the Creator to all His Creation – and to men of all nations, whether they recognize it or not. It is He Who has blessed the earth – on every continent - with fruitfulness. He and He alone has caused ***the earth to bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself.*** Genesis 1:11. It is He, and he alone, Who causes rain to fall in its season – both the autumn and spring rains, in order that we may gather in our grain, our new wine, and our oil. It is He Who especially blesses the land of Israel by causing it to produce a harvest of seven species – barley, wheat, figs, pomegranates, grapes, dates, and olives - in abundance for us to share with the world. It is in honor and recognition of these things that We gather branches and fruit from four species and wave those branches and fruit joyfully throughout the Festival. It is as a testimony to the world of the goodness and watchful care of the Holy One our God that we move out of our paneled houses and dwell in temporary, flimsy shelters – so that all people in all generations will remember the awesome story of how the Holy One enabled men, women, and children in Covenant with Him to both dwell safely and dine bountifully in booths for forty years when He brought us out of the land of Egypt. Leviticus 23:43. Oh what a glorious and awe-inspiring tale of redemption the Feast of Tabernacles tells!

What is HaKhel’s Purpose in the Holy One’s Grand Redemptive Plan for Mankind and Creation?

The Holy One has strategically planned out every aspect of His Redeemed Nation's calendar to correspond to a component of His Redemptive Plan of Redemption for Mankind and Creation. *HaKhel* is no exception. *HaKhel*, in fact, is perhaps the most blatantly obvious part of the great passion play. First of all, it is to involve every member of the Redeemed Community – every man, every woman, and every child. Secondly, since it is a part of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is specifically intended to reach foreigners. Thirdly, there is no hiddenness or subtlety to *HaKhel*; it is 100% up front and direct. All it consists of, after the assembling together, is the reading the inspired Words that the Creator knows that men desperately need to hear. There is no commentary. There is no room for man's difference of opinion. So what you have is *maximum attendance* - consisting of pilgrims with awestruck hearts, no less - at the *optimal time*, with *minimal diversion or distraction*. That is a recipe for life-changing - indeed world-changing – impact.

Just as in every seventh year servants are to required to choose between life independent of their benefactor *or service to that benefactor for life*, so once every seven years each man, each woman, and each child, whether born of Israel or born of the *goyim*, is to be required to choose *independence from* the Holy One [i.e. rejection of Torah] *or unity with and service to* the Holy One [walking according to Torah] for life.

I cannot underscore the importance of this *mitzvah* enough. *Ha-Khel* is designed to assure that *every generation of the Redeemed*, and every “foreigner” engrafted into the Redeemed Community, will have the opportunity – and personal responsibility - to make the choice Moshe called upon the generation assembled before him on the plains of Moav to make: *vacharta b'chay'im* [choose life!]. Multiple times in each generation the Torah challenge is to be presented to every man, woman, and child. Everyone is to be called upon to choose for himself. But every generation will hear Moshe cry out to them: ***Choose Life – that you and your seed may live!***

Questions for Today's Study

1. How old was Moshe when he made this final speech? What did he mean he could no longer “go out and come in”?
2. In chapter 31 verse 3 Moshe says that both the Holy One and Israel would have a part to play in the taking of the Land from the Kena'anim [Canaanite peoples].
[A] What was the Holy One's part?
[B] What was the part of the Redeemed Community?
3. What promises did Israel have to rely upon as they entered the Land filled with nations larger and stronger than they?

4. What instructions did Moshe give to Y'hoshua [Joshua] before he led the Israelites into the Land of Promise?
5. In verse 9 we are told that Moshe wrote down the Torah (some say just the book of Deuteronomy) and gave it to two different groups of people. To what two groups did Moshe entrust the things He had written?
6. What did Moshe say was to be done with that which he had written? When? Why?
7. In Isaiah 63 someone appears in Jerusalem who is *glorious in his appearance*.

Hineh [*Behold!*], *The Holy One has proclaimed to the end of the eretz,*
*Say you to the daughter of Tziyon, **Behold, your salvation comes;***
behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

*They shall call them **am ha-kodesh** [the holy people],*
***ge'ulei Adonai** [the redeemed of the Holy One]:*
*and you shall be called **D'rushah** [sought out], **Ir lo ne'ezavah** [a city not forsaken].*

Mi-zeh ba me'Edom [*Who is this who comes from Edom*]
with dyed garments from Botzrah?
This One who is glorious in his clothing, marching in the greatness of his strength?

I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

Madua adom lil'vusheicha [*Why is your clothing red,*]
and your garments like him who treads in the wine vat?

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with me:
yes, I trod them in my anger, and trampled them in my wrath;
and their lifeblood is sprinkled on my garments, and I have stained all my clothing.

For yom nakam** [the day of vengeance/vindication] **was in my heart,
And shnat ge'ulay** [the year of my redemption] **is come.

I looked, and there was none to help;
and I wondered that there was none to uphold:
therefore my own arm brought salvation to me; and my wrath, it upheld me.
I trod down the peoples in my anger, and made them drunk in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the eretz.

Answer the following questions about the one described by Yeshayahu as “glorious in appearance”:

- [A] Where has he come from?
- [C] Why are his garments stained?
- [D] Who (what ministry, religious group, evangelist, prophet, apostle, teacher, or pastor) does he say helped him?

8. Today's reading from the Apostolic Scriptures is taken from Romans 7:7-8.

*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? **May it never be!**
However, I wouldn't have known sin except through the law.
For I wouldn't have known coveting unless the law had said, "**You are not to covet.**"
But sin, finding occasion through the mitzvah, produced in me all kinds of coveting.
For apart from the law, sin is dead.*

According to Romans 7 what purpose did Paul say the “law” [Greek word “nomos”, meaning regulation or ordinance] served for him?

May you cry out passionately for - and recognize - the hour of His visitation.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Job 42:1-6

*Then Iyov [Job] answered the Holy One: "**I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be restrained.**"*

***You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I didn't know.***

***You said, 'Listen [sh'ma], now, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you will answer me.'***

***I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.
Therefore I abhor myself, and return in dust and ashes."***