

# *Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*<sup>1</sup>

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS:      **Torah Nitzavim:**              **Deuteronomy 30:11-20**  
                         **Haftarah:**                                      **Isaiah 62:6-10**  
                         **B'rit Chadasha:**                              **Colossians 3:14-25**

*Choose life, for the sake of yourself and your seed.*

[Deuteronomy 30:19-20]

Today's Meditation is Ezekiel 33:7-9;

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

*Ki ha-mitzvah hazot asher anochi metzaveicha hayom* – For this directive with which I am enjoining you today ... *lo-niflet hi mimeicha* – it is not too mysterious for you ... *v'lo-reichokah hi* – nor is it far from you. Deuteronomy 30:11.

The 'big bang' of Torah comes *today*. Believe it or not, *it all comes down to this*. The moment has finally come for the delivery of the *ultimate message* the Holy One has been keeping Moshe alive all these many years to give. While this aliyah will not by any means constitute the *physical end* of the Torah, all that follows will constitute *epilogue*. The remaining chapters will consist of *Moshe's personal farewell, his final passing of the torch to Y'hoshua* [Joshua], a prophetic "song" outlining the events of world history all the way up to its culmination, and *the beautiful story of Moshe's death and burial on Mount Nebo*. Understand, therefore, that everything Moshe has been telling us up to today's aliyah – at least everything since Deuteronomy 1:1 - has been *intended to prepare us for the few words we will read on this day*. Are you ready? Just get this image in your mind: *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*.

## *The Friend of the Bridegroom Is About to Make His Final Pitch*

Many see the passionate approach Moshe takes in *Nitzavim* and picture him as an *evangelist*, calling millions of people to the moment of decision. I understand and appreciate the analogy. However, I see this passage a little differently. I see Moshe as the trustworthy '*friend of the Bridegroom*', aggressively courting a Bride on behalf of his King. In my view, what Moshe is doing is bringing the Bride-candidate [the *sh'ma*<sup>2</sup> people of the Holy One, in all generations] to the *Chuppah*. While

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<sup>2</sup> 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.*"

‘standing’ there, he offers her some poignant last-minute words of encouragement and exhortation, which equate basically to the ancient Hebrew equivalent of ‘*you can do this!*’ So, Dear Reader, please hear ultimate *friend of the Bridegroom* declaring over you today:

***Ki ha-mitzvah hazot asher anochi metzaveicha hayom***

*This mitzvah that I am prescribing to you today*

***lo-niflet hi mimeicha v'lo-rechokah hi***

*is not too mysterious or remote from you.*

***Lo b'shamayim hi l'emor***

*It is not in heaven so [that you should] say,*

***mi ya'aleh-lanu ha-shamaymah v'yikacheiha lanu***

*'Who shall go up to heaven and bring it to us*

***v'yashmi'einu otah v'na'asenah***

*so that we can hear [Hebrew, **sh'ma**] it and do [Hebrew **asah**<sup>3</sup>] it?'*

***V'lo-me'eiver l'yam hi l'emor***

*It is not over the sea so [that you should] say,*

***mi ya'avor-lanu el-ever ha-yam v'yikacheiha lanu***

*Who will cross the sea and get it for us,*

***V'yashmi'einu otah v'na'asenah***

*so that we will be able to hear [Hebrew, **sh'ma**] it and do [Hebrew **asah**] it?'*

***Ki karov eleicha ha-davar me'od***

*It is something that is very close to you.*

***b'ficha uv'l'avvecha l'asoto***

*It is in your mouth and in your heart, for you to do [Hebrew **asah**] it.*

**[Deuteronomy 30:11-14]**

Torah originated in another world, another realm. But it did not remain there. Sinai happened. The Holy One graciously stepped out of eternity into time and out of the invisible realm into the visible one. As a result of this 'big bang', Torah now belongs to earth – and to us and every one of our descendants, individually and collectively - as well. Torah is now as much a part of life on earth as Light, and dry land and seas, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, and sea creatures and winged creatures, and creatures that walk on four and six and eight and that crawl on 1000 legs, and man. By the grace of the Holy One Torah is now an integral part of this world - easily accessible to all. Co-laboring with Moshe, the Holy One

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

made sure that Torah is *karov me'od* - very near - to all mankind. He even wants you to know that Torah is *b'ficha* – i.e. in your mouth, and *b'l'vacha* – i.e. in your heart.

### ***What's In Your Mouth?***

Okay, so most of us can understand how in light of what happened on Har Sineh [Mount Sinai] Torah is now *karov me'od* – i.e. very close – to us. We can even understand – a little bit – how Torah is *in our hearts*. But how on earth can it be said that Torah is *in our mouths*. What does this mean? It means what Moshe said way back near the beginning of his second speech, right after uttering his most famous '***Sh'ma Yisrael ...*** ' [Hear, O Israel ...]. At that time Moshe said:

***Sh'ma Yisra'el***

*Hear O Israel!*

***Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad***

*The Holy One is our God, the Holy One is One.*

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***V'hayu ha-devarim ha-eleh asher anochi metzaveicha hayom***

*Set these words with which I instruct you this day*

***al-l'v'Veicha***

*upon your heart.*

***V'shinantam l'vaneicha***

*Teach them faithfully to your children*

***v'dibarta bam b'shivteicha b'veiteicha***

*and speak of them as you sit in your home*

***uv'leichteicha v'derech***

*and as you walk along the way*

***uv'shoch'beicha uv'kumeicha***

*And when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

**[Deuteronomy 6:4-6]**

Are the words of Torah in your mouth? Or are you a man/woman/child of 'unclean lips' like the prophet *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] before his call? Do you *teach the words of Torah* – i.e. the ways of the Divine Bridegroom - *faithfully to your children* [a term broad enough, in Hebrew thought, to include not only natural children, but all people into whose lives you have an opportunity of input]? Do you speak the beautiful words of Torah **as you sit in your home**? If someone had 'bugged' your home or your telephone or your computer keyboard today *would words of Torah have been heard*? What about 'as you walk along the way'? Do you speak the wisdom and counsel of Torah as you walk along the way? How about *when you are in your car or on the bus or commuter train*? How about *when you are at the office or factory or farm where you work*? How about *when you are at the hotel or campground where you*

*vacation? How about when you are at the grocery store or shopping center where you shop?*

The words of Torah are *sweet to the taste*. Put some of those words in your mouth today. Do not be content to be a person of unclean lips any longer.

Torah is now in our *hearts*. Let it be so. Let Torah have full reign there. Let it displace every opposing affection, emotion, attitude, appetite, and opinion. And may Torah also be in our *mouths*. May we *savor it*. May we *enjoy it*. May we *delight in it*. And may we *let its sweetness gradually displace both the noxious odor and poisonous nectar of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge*.

### ***At Last We Have Reached the Critical Crossroads***

Look up ahead, Beloved. What do you see? I, like Moshe, have been trying to prepare you for this moment for several weeks now. At the beginning of our study of *Re'eh*, I stated:

Moshe is going to start this week's parsha by laying before us *two pathways*. He is going to ask us to choose, ***very soon***, which of these two pathways we will follow. One pathway, he prophetically assures us, will lead to a life of *unfathomable blessing* and *ever-growing shalom*, and promises to establish our lives as *a fountain of blessing not only for ourselves and our families, but for everyone we meet*. The other pathway, he prophetically warns us, will lead to a life of perpetually chasing after the wind, of miserable failure after miserable failure, and of ever-intensifying despair – and promises only a swirling vortex that relentlessly drags our lives – and the lives of those we love – downward toward a pool of toxic spiritual waste.

If that were all there were to it, the choice between the two paths would be easy. Who in their right mind would not opt for blessing? Who possessed of their faculties would choose chasing after the wind? Ah, but *there is a 'catch'*. The first pathway, you see, is ***the Bridegroom's pathway***. If we choose that pathway, it is *the Bridegroom's will* that will determine our every step, and *the Bridegroom's glory* that will be the reason behind everything we do. It is well lit, and its boundaries are clearly defined, but it is a *pathway of surrender*. The second pathway is ***the way of the Runaway Bride***. It is for self-willed souls who do not want any Bridegroom – or anyone else, for that matter - telling them what to do, where to go, or how to live. It is not really a pathway at all, but a vast no-man's land, like an *unmarked outback*. It is dark and shadowy. It has no boundaries. It seems to offer many things that look like exciting trails one could follow [although none really lead anywhere]. The choice of

which trail to pursue is man's and man's alone.

These two pathways will quickly diverge right in front of our eyes. Each of us will, very soon, have to choose which of these two pathways we will choose. And when that happens we – and everyone close to us – will have to live with the consequences of that choice.

Well, *here we are*. The moment of choice of which I spoke to you in the quotation above is now upon us. There are indeed two roads diverging in front of us – just as in Robert Frost's famous yellow wood.<sup>4</sup> We are at the critical crossroads in life. We have a choice to make. The mitzvot of Torah have now all been spoken<sup>5</sup>. The scenarios have all been laid out. The blessings have all been described. The warnings have all been given. We now must decide what we are going to do with what we have heard.

### ***The Challenge is Placed Squarely Before Us***

The shofar has sounded loud and clear. The watchman has cried out his warning. The time has come. Our destiny awaits. We must decide - for ourselves and our households - how we are going to respond to the Bridegroom-King's invitation. Will we choose a life of eternal significance and majesty – or a slow death of selfish, soulish pseudo-intellectualism and hyper-sensuality? Will we *love the Holy One our God, walk in His ways, and keep His mitzvot, His chukot, and His mishpatim – or won't we?* If, as, when, and to the extent we embark upon the *sh'ma* lifestyle that Moshe has mapped out for us we will become Heaven's ambassadors to the earth – a special treasure people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. We will *live and multiply, and the Holy One our God will bless us in the land that we go to possess*. If, as when and to the extent we choose the other pathway – the pathway of the runaway bride - we consent to be ruled by fleshly appetites and manipulated by the ideas and ideologies that our fallen human minds create to perpetuate the serpent's perverted, self-promoting opinions of what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, what is fair and unfair, what is just and unjust, and what is moral and immoral. Let's go over the differences between the two lifestyle options one more time.

### ***The Kingdom of Heaven is for Lovers***

The Bridegroom-King is not interested in filling the ranks of His Kingdom with *mercenaries* – *i.e.* people who fight battles in His Name in expectation of fame, fortune, and monetary reward. He is also not interested in taking on *employees* – whether to do menial tasks, to manage people and money, or to make executive

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<sup>4</sup> The line is, of course, borrowed from Robert Frost's poem '*The Road Not Taken*'.

<sup>5</sup> There is only one mitzvah left for Moshe to speak, concerning *Ha-K'hel*, the public reading of the Torah in the hearing of all men women and children at Sukkot, every 7<sup>th</sup> year.

decisions in the hope of earning wages, benefits, perks, salary, and/or deferred compensation packages. Nor does the Holy One take any delight in or have any place in His Kingdom for *worshippers for hire* – who have His praise on their lips but their treasure in the things of this world. The Kingdom of Heaven is not for people like that. The Kingdom of Heaven is for *lovers*. Hence Moshe makes it clear that the first and most important requirement for accepting the invitation is to *love the Holy One your God*. **Deuteronomy 30:16[a]**.

The absolute necessity of love for the Holy One as the prerequisite to participating in the Torah lifestyle should come as no surprise to us. Back in parsha *Va'etchanan* Moshe called us to attention with the most famous *Sh'ma Yisrael!* ever spoken and followed immediately with '***And you are to love the Holy One your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength***. **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**. And so, Dear Reader, as we stand in the Valley of Decision the first question we need to ask ourselves is '*Do we love the Holy One our God?*' The question that must be answered at this critical stage is not '*Do you believe in Him?*'. That should have been decided a long time ago. The question on the table at this point is also not "*Do you want something from Him – like money, or comfort, or a sense of self-worth, or protection, or a position of influence, or spiritual gifts, or a ticket to Heaven?*" The Kingdom-threshold questions – the ones Moshe is peering across time and asking us at this moment – are:

*'Have you allowed your eyes to gaze upon and be captivated by  
the Bridegroom-King's majesty and His holiness?*

*Have you allowed your ears to drink in and be swept up  
in the beauty and sweetness of His Voice?*

*Have you allowed your heart to respond to His essential attributes  
of mercy, compassion, long suffering, forgiveness, and covenant faithfulness?*

*Are you taking absolute delight in Him for Who He is?*

*Are you enjoying walking and talking with Him –  
and are you allowing Him the pleasure of enjoying walking and talking with you?*

The Holy One is eminently worthy of adoration. If the Bridegroom-King is not our first and most passionate love ... well, if He is not that, the real problem is easy to diagnose: *we simply do not know Him*. No one can know Him and not love Him passionately. He is worthy of every human being's affection. He is worthy of all our devotion. He is worthy of all our individual and collective time, energy, attachment, and attention. For a human being to fail to love Him – and to do so with fervor and abandonment - means that person is pathologically self-obsessed. Our Bridegroom-King is glorious, mesmerizing, and intoxicating. He is good. He is kind. He is wise. He is compassionate. He is patient. He is amazing. If we do not

love Him we are either blind or deceived. If we do not love Him we have failed to see and recognize the most obvious thing in the world – that our Creator is altogether lovely, the fairest of Ten Thousand, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, and the Bright and Morning Star. The Heavens declare His glory, and the firmament shows off His Handiwork. **Psalm 19:1**. Can we do any less? And if we could, why would we want to? Cherubim and serafim adore Him. Angels and living creatures long to be near Him. He deserves a Bride-People on earth who love Him equally as well – a people who delight in Him for Who He is, who remember and appreciate all He has done for them, who know the sweetness of His Voice and the gentleness of His Touch, and who can neither ignore or forget how great His kindness and forgiveness toward them has been. Moshe therefore declares very clearly that the first and foremost essential prerequisite for the Torah lifestyle is extravagant, passionate, steadfast, abiding, and unconditional love for the Bridegroom-King Himself.

***Anochi metzaveicha hayom***

*I have enjoined you this day*

***l'ahavah et-Adonai Eloheicha l'lecheit b'drachav***

*to love the Holy One your God, and to walk in his ways,*

***v'lish'mor mitzvotav***

*and to keep [Hebrew sh'mar<sup>6</sup> meaning cherish, guard, cling to] his mitzvot*

***v'chukotav umishpatav***

*and his directives, and his declarations of what should be done*

Love for the Holy One is not just sentimentality. It is a consuming passion that inspires and motivates us to walk with Him wherever He leads. It is what propels us down *the narrow pathway of Torah*. If anything other than love for our King motivates us, our Torah observance quickly becomes legalistic, ritualistic, and ineffectual. And once that happens what the Holy One intended to be a sweet aroma of restoration in the world becomes a stench in its nostrils instead. It is not a matter of obedience and reward; it is a matter of Kingdom honor representation. We not only are to do what our King says – we are to show the world His Heart and His Beautiful Mind.

***This is the Way, Walk In It!***

Moshe defines the second important requirement for accepting the invitation is to walk in [the King's] Ways. **Deuteronomy 30:16[b]**. What does it mean to walk in the

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<sup>6</sup> 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: *Then 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.*

King's Ways? The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'way' is *derech*. It refers to a walking journey of many steps along a predetermined pathway toward a planned destination, to accomplish a planned objective. It implies intentionality, purpose, movement, and perseverance. Walking in the Holy One's ways is thus much, much more than merely 'obeying his laws'. Walking in the Holy One's ways means *going with Him wherever He goes, and doing with Him whatever He is doing* – and doing both *with the same attitude, demeanor, and intention that He is expressing*. It means sitting at His feet, clinging to the hem of His Garment, hanging on His Words, following His every direction, and walking in His footsteps. What we are called to do is to model for the world the wonder of Who He Is, How He Thinks, and how much He Cares. That is why love must be the root of all we do. Love for Him, love for His Creation, and love for our fellow man. That is why mercy, kindness, compassion, patience, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control and joy must be woven into all our words, all our reactions, all our behaviors, all our interactions, and all our relationships.

What will happen if, as, when, and to the extent we love the Holy One and walk in His ways? Moshe has told us before. He summarizes now by saying the result will be:

***v'chayita v'ravita***

*that you may live and increase*

***uv'racheicha Adonai Eloheicha b'aretz asher-atah va-shamah l'rishtah***

*and that the Holy One your God may bless you in the land you are going in to possess.*

**[Deuteronomy 30:16]**

But wait. What will happen if, as, when, and to the extent we choose *the other pathway*? Moshe made that clear to us before as well. He summarizes now by saying:

***V'im-yifneh levaveicha v'lo tish'ma***

*But if your heart turns aside and you do not sh'ma,*

***v'nidachta v'hishtachavita l'elohim acherim v'avadeitam***

*you will be led astray to bow down to foreign gods and worship them;*

***Higadeiti lachem hayom ki avod toveidun***

*I am warning you today that [if you do that] you will be wanderers.*

***lo-ta'arichun yamim al-ha-adamah***

*You will not last very long in the land*

***asher atah over et-ha-Yarden lavo shamah l'rishtah***

*that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.*

**[Deuteronomy 30:17-18]**

And then, all of heaven stands at attention in wonder, Moshe then calls Heaven and

Earth as his two required Covenant witnesses, and speaks over us the ultimate challenge – and brings the Torah that is so precious to him to a climax:

***Ha-chayim v'ha-mavet natati l'faneicha***

*Before you I have placed life and death,*

***Ha-b'rachah v'ha-kelalah***

*the blessing and the curse.*

***Uv'charta b'chayim***

*Choose life<sup>7</sup>,*

***L'ma'an tichyeh atah v'zar'acha***

*so that you and your seed will survive.*

***L'ahavah et-Adonai Eloheicha***

*[Make the choice] to love God your Lord,*

***lish'moa b'kolo ul'dovkah-vo***

*to sh'ma Him, and to attach yourself to Him.*

***Ki hu chayeicha v'orech yameicha***

*For He<sup>8</sup> is your sole means of survival and long life*

***L'sheivet al-ha-adamah asher nishba Adonai la'avoteicha***

*when you dwell in the land that God swore to your fathers,*

***L'Avraham l'Yitzchak ul'Ya'akov latet lahem***

*Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov [Jacob],[promising] that He would give it to them.*

**[Deuteronomy 30:19-20]**

So *there it is*. The invitation has been issued. The benefits and the disadvantages are easy to weigh. The costs associated with both alternatives are clear. The consequences of the wrong choice – for you, your family, and all your assigned spheres of influence - are dire. All *'it's too hard for any human being to do'* and *'I'm just not qualified'* and *'But I am not 'Jewish'*, and *'I thought Jesus did away with all that'* excuses have been clearly revealed as utter nonsense. The choice is now yours.

Note the passion with which Moshe completes his fiery speeches/prophetic messages to the Holy One's Redeemed – of all generations. He cannot stop at just introducing mankind to its Creator. He cannot stop in just revealing the Holy

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<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew phrase our English Bibles translate as 'choose life' is ***u'bacharta b'chayim***. The verb we translate as *choose* is *bachar* [*beit, chet, resh*], Strong's Hebrew word #977, pronounced *baw-khar'*. Its first Biblical usage is in Genesis 6:2, where we are told that the Sons of God saw that the daughters of men were desirable, and took as wives those whom they *chose* [Hebrew, *bachar*].

<sup>8</sup> Some English translations say "this is your sole means of survival ... .", implying that the Torah is the sole means of survival. This may be true, in a sense, but in Hebrew, the word these English writers translate as 'this' is clearly ***hu*** - the masculine pronoun [He]. The Hebrew word 'this', on the other hand, is *zeh*.

One's plan for people to get to know Him, and reach the potential He instilled in them, and draw all men unto Him, through *mitzvot*. He must push the envelope on the third – and most important – purpose of Torah. He wants us to CHOOSE.

*Behold, I set before you today life and peace, death and evil.*

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*... I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you,  
that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.*

***Now ... CHOOSE LIFE,  
SO THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN MAY LIVE! ! ! !***

Moshe does not want a bunch of legalists out there<sup>9</sup> polluting the earth in His Name. He wants a bunch of people who know, and respond to, both their Divine Bridegroom's voice and His tone of voice - and who will not *sh'ma* the voice of any other, including the voice of their own fleshly opinions or attitudes. He wants a bunch of people willing to make, and follow through on, a commitment to be *Bridal in orientation* towards Him and noble in presentation to the world.

So, Dear One, *now you know*: the study of Torah is not just a nice Bible study. What we have been doing in these studies is not academic in nature, but inspirational and spiritual. These studies are not just an introduction to “Hebrew Roots”, nor are they an apologetic for ‘Messianic Judaism’. These studies are about the calling of the Creator of the Universe – to you. Unlike forms of religion, you see, Torah is as *real* and as *practical* as it gets. It is the eternal word of the Holy One. It cannot pass away. Moshe boldly proclaims that your fate and the well being of your children hang in the balance – *depending upon how you respond to the Divine Bridegroom in this moment*. Theology cannot help you now. A belief system cannot help you now. A pastor or prophet or rabbi or friend cannot help you now. It has come down to just *you and the Holy One*. The Bridegroom-King is smiling – and holding out His Hand. Will you take it? Will you walk with Him the rest of your life – and into the World to Come? Will you go wherever He goes, eat whatever He gives you to eat, speak whatever words He calls upon you to speak, react only as He would react, and live as He models for you to live? And your answer is?

It comes down to just *you and Him*. The Bridal march is playing. Angels and saints from every age are standing at attention and staring in wonder. Heaven and Earth have been called as witnesses. Moshe is *pulling your hand toward the waiting Hand of the Bridegroom*. It is time to choose. ***B'charta b'chay'im!*** [Choose life!]

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<sup>9</sup> Neither did Shaul of Tarsus want a bunch of lawless ones running roughshod over his ‘gospel’.

## ***Introducing the Issue of Spiritual Depth Perception:***

*Where Do We See Ourselves In Relation to the ‘Commandment’ of the Holy One?*

The created world consists of many people and many things, of course. But in this critical moment of decision Moshe wants us to focus on only two of those things: us and the ‘Commandment’ of the Bridegroom-King. The reality that he wants us to grasp is that the substance of life really just comes down to the distance that we allow to exist between those two things. If we view the ‘commandment’ [Hebrew **mitzvah**] of our Creator as too mysterious for us, too esoteric for us, too difficult for us to attain, or as merely an impossible ‘ideal’ standard by which we will be judged, that will have a tragic effect on us. We will let ‘the distance’ we perceive between us and the ‘commandment’ of the Bridegroom-King deter us from ‘going for it’. Because we fear the ‘commandment’ of the Holy One, we will listen when the serpent whispers in our ears his infamous interrogatory ‘*Did Elohim truly say?*’<sup>10</sup> We will seriously ponder the created being’s most audacious invitation to ‘be like God, knowing good and evil’. We will resent the Holy One. If we do not deny His existence, we will question His goodness. And if we do not hide from Him behind the modern equivalent of fig leaves, we will devise and implement schemes to try to manipulate Him. We will either reject the ‘commandment’ altogether, as an outdated ‘law of Moses’, or we will use it wrongly – *i.e.* to judge our fellow man. We will adopt a form of ideology, philosophy, and or religion that is full of criticism, accusation, judgment and condemnation. We will turn the ‘commandment’ of the Holy One into a matter of intellectual review - something for discussion and debate in study halls, seminaries, institutions of organized religion, coffee shops, and other ivory towers. Woe to us, and to everyone in our sphere of influence, if we embrace that level of spiritual depth perception. We will become the blind leading the blind.

If, on the other hand, we view the ‘commandment’ of our Creator as part of our DNA and as the blueprint for our destiny, we will embrace it as our true identity. We will recognize it as a fountain of living water that flows out of our intimate communion with our Bridegroom-King. We will perceive the ‘commandment’ of our Maker as our ‘true colors’ – not something external to us. We will cherish each of His instructions for life of earth as if it were a poem written about us by our True Love. We will live out of a Psalm 19:7-10 mentality, proclaiming:

***The law [Hebrew, Torah] of the Holy One is perfect, converting the soul;  
the testimony [Heb. edut] of the Holy One is sure, making wise the simple.  
The Holy One’s statutes [Heb. piqudei Adonai] are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment [Heb. mitzvah] of the Holy One is pure, enlightening the eyes.***

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<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:1: *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that the Holy One Elohim had made. And he said to the woman, “Did Elohim truly say ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”*

*The fear of the Holy One is cleanness [Heb. tahorah], enduring forever;  
The Holy One's judgments [Heb. mishpatei Adonai] are true and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold; Yea, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*

We will walk out a Psalm 119 lifestyle, declaring:

*Teach me, O Holy One, the way of Your statutes,  
and I will cherish and guard it to the end.  
Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law;  
Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.  
Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.*  
[Psalm 119:33-35]

If we choose this level of spiritual depth perception, as Moshe calls us to do, we will think lovingly, and often, of each of the sweet ‘commandments’ we have received. We will delight in them. We will gradually conform our thoughts, attitudes, speech, reactions, and behaviors to the bright, beautiful image they describe. We will grow into the wise, compassionate, and powerful person they continually call forth from deep within our eternal, God-breathed nish’mat chayim<sup>11</sup>. We will speak to others about ‘the commandment’ of our Bridegroom-King joyfully, in hushed tones of tenderness. We will share it with others only as and when directed, and then with delight, with mercy, with compassion, with patience, and with humility. We will wear it well. We will eat, drink and sleep it to the fullest. And we will model its *shalom* to the world joyfully, peacefully, kindly, gently, and gracefully.

The Kingdom of Heaven is in us. It is even in those of us with the hardest of hearts, like the Pharisees who tangled with Yeshua. See **Luke 17:20-21**. The Kingdom of Heaven is His ‘commandment’ – and His ‘commandment’ is in US. It is always there – even if it is hidden. It is always one Divine Encounter away from being the next cry of our heart. It is always one pure thought away from being the next word out of our mouth. And that is why Yochanan the Immerser and Yeshua of Natzret both taught that the Kingdom is always at hand.

### ***The Human Mouth As The Barometer Of What Lies Within***

Yeshua Rabbeinu also taught that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. **Luke 6:45**. As the Psalmist said: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Holy One, my strength and my Redeemer*. **Psalm 19:14**.

Our mouth – with both its expressions and its utterances - serves as a barometer of whatever is stirring our hearts. Our mouth can function like the jaws of a viper – or

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<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2:7: *And the Holy One Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils nish’mat-chayim [i.e. the breath of abundant, eternal life]; and man became a living being.*

it can be full of sweetness. **Song of Songs 5:16.** Our mouth can serve as the watercourse for the river of life – or as the crater of a destructive volcano. Blessings can roll off our tongues like drops of honey – or curses can fly off of them like a flock of bats venturing forth from a dark cave. Grace can pour forth from our lips – or deadly venom can spew forth from them. It all depends upon what we hold in – and let control – the meditations of our hearts. Our mouth can be a fountain of blessing – or a cesspool of cursing. May it be much, much more of the former, and much, much less of the latter!

### ***That You May Asah Them***

Why are the *mitzvot* so important? They are not given to us as a pathway by which we are supposed to earn personal salvation. They are not a formula for earning ‘righteous’ standing. They are the building blocks of the Kingdom of Heaven. What we are supposed to do with them is to *asah* them. That means to be very ‘hands on’ with them, but to do so according to a greater plan. We are to *work with them daily* the way a potter works with clay and water. We are to engage with them constantly the way an artist continually engages with paint, canvas, and brush. We are to reveal their hidden beauty and give them voice the way a midwife causes a newborn child to draw its first breath and release its first cry. We are to bring life to them the way a sculptor brings stone tablets to life. We are to consider them the raw materials out of which to build a Masterpiece of a life for the world to see. The *mitzvot* of Torah are not a list of do’s and don’ts; they are tools we have received on loan from the Wisest, Kindest, and Most Creative Craftsman in the Universe. Steward them wisely, Dear Ones!

### ***Questions Regarding Today’s Study***

1. What three places within each individual did the Holy One say His instructions for living were to be? [See verse 14]
2. What three things did the Holy One say His chosen people needed to do to be allowed to live and multiply and be blessed in the Land of Promise? [See verse 16]
3. What three things did the Holy One say would bring upon the People the ‘curses’ of the Torah? [See verse 17]
4. In today’s final aliyah of the 7<sup>th</sup> haftarah of consolation Yeshayahu [Isaiah] speaks the following prophetic declaration, summing up the message which the Holy One has been speaking in the *haftarot* for the past 7 weeks. The message began seven weeks ago with the words ***Nachamu, nachamu ami*** [*Comfort, comfort My people ...*] **Isaiah 40:1.** The purpose of these 7 haftarot has been to assure us of the Holy One’s continuing faithfulness even in the aftermath of the devastations wrought on us throughout the centuries on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av – the day on which both

Temples were destroyed and Jerusalem overrun, a little over 600 years apart to the day, and the day on which we were forcibly expelled from England in the thirteenth century and from Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (amid other tragedies). The conclusion of the matter is the following passionate declaration of our Covenant Partner in Heaven:

***Al-chomotayich Y'rushalayim hifkadeiti shomrim***

*I have set watchmen on your walls, Y'rushalayim;*

***kol-ha-yom v'chol-ha-laylah tamid lo yecheishu***

*they shall never hold their shalom day nor night:*

***ha-maz'kirim et-Adonai al-dami lachem***

*you who call on the Holy One, take no rest*

***V'al-titnu dami lo ad-yeichonen v'ad-yasim et-Y'rushalayim***

*and give him no rest, until he establish, and until he make Jerusalem*

***tehilah b'aretz***

*a praise in the eretz.*

To a people who have no Temple, who are enslaved in a foreign land and barred by law from returning to Jerusalem, the prophet of consolation proclaims:

***Nish'ba Adonai b'mino uvizroa uzo***

*The Holy One has sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength,*

***im-eten et-deganeich od ma'achal l'oyevayich***

*Surely I will no more give your grain to be food for your enemies;*

***v'im-yishtu v'nei-nechar tirosheich asher yaga'at bo***

*and foreigners shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored:*

***Ki me'asfav yocheiluhu v'hileilu et-Adonai***

*but those who have garnered it shall eat it, and praise the Holy One;*

***umekabetzav yishtuhu b'chatzrot kod'shi***

*and those who have gathered it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.*

Though no human being alive at the time the words were pronounced could physically do what the words said was to be done, the Holy One gave this directive, for angels in Heaven, and for future generations of the people now in exile, to *sh'ma*, *sh'mar*, and *asah*:

***Ivru ivru b'she'arim***

*Go through, go through the gates;*

***panu derech ha-am***

*prepare you the way of the people;*

***solu solu ha-mesilah***

*cast up, cast up the highway;*

***saklu me'even***

*gather out the stones;*

***harimu nes al-ha-amim***

*lift up an ensign for the nations.*

**[Isaiah 62:10]**

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven. Do not look be content to upon things as they appear to be *now*. Look upon them as the Holy One's words tell us they are *going to become*. Have eyes to see and ears to hear. And take comfort that His word is true, and His promises sure.

[A] What does the Holy One say He has done for Y'rushalayim [Jerusalem]?

[B] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the Hebrew word for the people the Holy One has put on Jerusalem's walls [Strong's Hebrew Word # 8104]. Compare this word with the Hebrew word for "circumcise" which Moshe used in Deuteronomy 30:6 [See Strong's].

[C] How do you think these things are related? [See Romans 8:26]

[D] How long are Jerusalem's intercessors to give the Holy One "no rest"?

[E] What things does the Holy One promise regarding the grain and wine of His redeemed remnant?

[F] In Isaiah 62:10 the Holy One gives orders sort of like an army officer would give orders. What things does He command?

5. In Colossians 3:14-25 Shaul continues the theme of putting on garments (in preparation for the wedding feast of Messiah). In the beginning of today's aliyah Shaul tells us to put on one final "garment" which will be a "bond" or a "band" of perfection around us.

*Above all these things walk in love - which is the bond of perfection.*

**[Colossians 3:14]**

[A] What is the final or ultimate "garment" we are told to "put on"?

[B] Note that in today's aliyah Moshe mentions love [of the Holy One] as the essence of the entire Torah (see Deuteronomy 30:16, 20). Is Shaul's instruction to the Redeemed at Colossae consistent or inconsistent with Torah? Explain.

[C] How does the final, ultimate garment mentioned by Shaul work like the Hebrew word #8104 [see your answer to question #4] on our actions?

[D] What do you think it really means to 'walk in love' in the sense Shaul employs that phrase? Is it just nice words – or does it have *practical application in real life*?

*May you and every member of your household choose life!*

***The Rabbi's son***

## ***Meditation for Today's Study***

Ezekiel 33:7-9

*So you, son of man ... I have set you a watchman [Hebrew, tzafah]  
to the house of Yisra'el;  
therefore hear [Hebrew, sh'ma] the word at my mouth,  
and give them warning from me.*

*When I tell the wicked, "**O wicked man, you will surely die**",  
and you don't speak to warn the wicked from his way;  
that wicked man will die in his iniquity,  
but I will require his blood at your hand.*

*Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it,  
and he doesn't turn from his way;  
he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.*