

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Nitzavim:*** **Deuteronomy 29:9-29**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 61:10-11**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Colossians 3:12**

Beware lest there be among you ... a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit.

[Deuteronomy 29:18]

Today's Meditation is Ezekiel 33:1-5;

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

Atem Nitzavim ha-yom kuleichem - Today you are all standing ... *l'fnei Adonai Eloheichem* - before the Face of the Holy One your God ... *rasheichem shivteichem zikneichem v'shotreichem* – your tribal leaders, your elders, and your scribes - *kol ish Yisra'el* – every man of Israel. **Deuteronomy 29:9.**

At this point each year the realization finally hits us that we are headed into the 'home stretch' of Torah – and for that matter, the home stretch of the life and prophetic ministry of Moshe. It is, you see, almost time for the Hebrew who started life 120 years previously by cheating death in the Nile to surrender that which no Pharaoh could take away. Amram and Yocheved youngest son – Aharon and Miryam's little brother – Pharaoh's worst nightmare - is about to *be gathered to his people*. And every member of the Holy One's redeemed community encamped on the plains of Moav awaiting the word to cross over the Jordan and possess the land *knows it*. Very soon Moshe's powerful voice will fall silent. His season for eloquent 'farewell' speeches' on the plains of Moav is almost over. But the crusty old prophet of *burning bushes* and *fiery mountaintops* is not dead yet. Indeed, this week Moshe will one more time wax extremely eloquent – especially for a man who once proclaimed himself 'slow of speech and thick of tongue'. I hope that you, like the author of these studies, cannot wait to *jump right in*.

Today You are All Standing

Moshe has mustered the hosts of *B'nei Yisrael*. Every man, woman, and child stands at attention before, and trembles at the Presence of, the Holy One. Moshe has greeted us with a rousing speech, pulsing with the energy of atmosphere-shifting *devarim*, in which he laid out the Holy One's Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan for mankind and Creation in all its glory. He has written down the vision, and described both the mission we are called to perform and the major obstacles we are to face and overcome. Now he wants to know – are we 'in' ... or

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are we ‘out’?

Looming on our horizon are a series of Appointments with our Creator. It starts with *Yom Teruah – the day of trumpet blasts*. Ten days later comes *Yom Kippur – the day of denying self and rehearing our own deaths*. Four days after that we gather the four species, enter our temporary outdoor dwellings, and kick off the joyous festival of *Sukkot – i.e. Tabernacles*. Each of us is called to appear before the King for these scheduled appointments and renew our pledge to dedicate our time, our energy, our passion and if necessary our life to the great mission of strengthening and extending His Reign. We are each being encouraged to take an *active participant in the stunning drama of Divine Redemption* instead of sitting on the sidelines as *conscientious objectors, critics* or *spectators*. All our meditations in Torah this week are Divinely choreographed to provide us with a perfectly fitting suit of Kingdom armor in which to undertake this great quest. We are like a bride who is making ourselves ready. And the beautiful garments with which we are dressing ourselves for the upcoming grand Coronation Ball are *the King’s own words of life*.

Moshe’s Farewell Address

At this point each year the realization finally hits us that we are headed into the ‘home stretch’ of Torah – and for that matter, the home stretch of the life and prophetic ministry of Moshe. It is, you see, almost time for the Hebrew who started life 120 years previously by cheating death in the Nile to surrender that which no Pharaoh could take away. Amram and Yocheved youngest son – Aharon and Miryam’s little brother – Pharaoh’s worst nightmare - is about to *be gathered to his people*. Every member of the Holy One’s redeemed community encamped on the plains of Moav awaiting the word to cross over the Jordan and possess the land *knows it*. Very soon Moshe’s powerful voice will fall silent. His season for eloquent ‘farewell’ speeches’ on the plains of Moav is almost over. But the crusty old prophet of *burning bushes* and *fiery mountaintops* is not dead yet. Indeed, this week Moshe will one more time wax extremely eloquent – especially for a man who once proclaimed himself ‘slow of speech and thick of tongue’. I hope that you, like the author of these studies, cannot wait to *jump right in*.

Looking Beyond the Mitzvot – To the Heart of the Matter

The past several parshot of Torah have consisted primarily of *mitzvot, mitzvot*, and more *mitzvot*. For weeks now Moshe has been revealing to us very specific things which we who have been redeemed by the Holy One and are being *recreated in the image of Messiah* are Divinely designed, programmed, and empowered to *do* - and in some cases *not do* – in order to model for all the world what a living, breathing relationship with the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven looks like in real life

application.

We have seen that the Hebraic concept of *mitzvot* does not equate well at all to the English concept of ‘commandments’. Instead, we have found that *Messiah is in the mitzvot* – i.e. that the essence of *mitzvot* is not obedience as much as it is **joinder**. One can – and is indeed generally expected to - obey a superior’s commandments alone, without the superior’s assistance, guidance, or instruction; one cannot, however, engage in *mitzvot* without intensive Divine interaction and assistance. That is why the **mitzvot** of Torah, as designed and presented in Torah, are the farthest thing in the world from ‘works of the flesh’; they are instead Divinely designed *arenas of interaction with the One Who Knows us Best and loves us Most*. According to Torah, our calling in life is not to ‘obey’ a bunch of ‘commandments’; it is instead to *hold tight to the Hand of our Beloved as we walk through the obstacle course of life, to listen for and to His instructions, and to approach the obstacle course of life His Way instead of flailing our way through it on our own*.

Moshe is teaching us the dance of life. The Bridegroom choreographs and orders each step, then patiently leads us through them. Our job is not to make up steps as we go. The point of the dance is not for us to try to dazzle the Bridegroom-King – or the world - with our talent and passion; it is to follow our Partner’s lead, and to just do whatever we see Him doing. By doing what our Divine Partner in the Dance of Life tells us we gradually learn to *see the situations and circumstances of our life from His perspective*. What is even more exciting, with a little practice we actually begin to *feel what He is feeling and think what He is thinking as He is leading us through the various steps of the dance*. *Mitzvot* are thus best seen not as ‘commandments’ in some English-monarchic, military, or religious sense, but as Divinely ordained opportunities for interaction through which we are invited to discover the personality, priorities and perspectives of the Holy One. The *mitzvot* are like a ‘case book’ through which the Divine Bridegroom has chosen to teach us how to *hear and respond to His Voice*, how to *begin to think like He thinks*, how to begin to judge with true wisdom and righteousness, as He judges, instead of according to conventional thinking, cultural predisposition, human emotion, and self-interest.

The Focus Shifts from Mitzvot to Marriage

Laying out the *mitzvot* of the Bridegroom for us has been Moshe’s focus for several weeks now. As we begin this week’s study, however, the focus of Torah is about to undergo a radical shift. Moshe’s fourth – and final – prophetic speech of the last year of his life is now ready to begin. In this fourth and final prophetic speech

*mitzvot*² will be few and far between. The *mitzvot* have, you see, pretty much all been laid out for us. Now that we know what the ways of the Bridegroom ARE, the question is, *what are we going to do about it?* And as critically important as the *mitzvot* of Torah Moshe has been setting before us are to fulfillment of our purpose and destiny on this earth, we are about to learn they are not by any means the *only thing that* the lives of the Holy One's redeemed are supposed to be about. Redeemed lives are definitely supposed to involve and be characterized by the *mitzvot*, it is true. But the *mitzvot* mean very little if the covenant upon which the *mitzvot* are based is not fresh in our minds and tender on our hearts. All the *mitzvot* in the world, without a *burning passion for our Covenant Partner in Heaven* and a *fierce dedication to His covenant*, mean nothing.

Do you recall how Moshe began the *mitzvot* section of his speeches on the plains of Moav with the passionate call for us to *love* the Holy One our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might? See Deuteronomy 6:4-5, where he laid the foundation for the *mitzvot* section of Torah as follows:

*Hear, O Israel: The Holy One our God, the Holy One is one!
Love the Holy One your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.
And these words with which I enjoin you today are to always be in/on your heart.*

Now after concluding the *mitzvot* section Moshe is about to bring us right back to this critical point. This is not, of course, mere coincidence. Moshe knows, you see, that if we do not love the Divine Bridegroom with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, then even if spend our entire lives busily engaged in Torah's *mitzvot*, we will be - as Shaul of Tarsus would later put it - as *tinkling brass* or a *clanging symbol*.

Moshe understood - and wants us to understand as well - that if, caught up in the minutia of observance of *mitzvot*, we ever let our passion for intimacy with our Divine Bridegroom slip away, the *mitzvot* we perform will become mere '*works of the flesh*', and there will be no redemptive power in them. The potential problem Moshe foresaw did not lie with the *mitzvot* of Torah. There was nothing wrong with them. They were - are - will always be - perfect in every way. In them was, is, and will always be LIFE ETERNAL - because they are God-conceived, God-breathed, and God-empowered. The potential for a problem involving the *mitzvot* exists solely because of *the hardness of our hearts*. Hence in today's aliyah Moshe will admonish the Betrothed Bride-to-be he has brought to the Holy One's altar of betrothal what the consequences will be if she elects to commit *adultery*. Here is how he puts it:

² There will be only one more *mitzvah* - the *mitzvah* of *ha-k'hal*.

L'oveireicha b'v'rit Adonai Eloheicha

You are thus being brought into the covenant of the Holy One your God,

uve'alato asher Adonai Eloheicha koret imcha hayom

and the oath that He is making with you today.

Pen-yesh bachem ish o-ishah o mishpachah o-shevet

There must not be among you - any man, woman, family or tribe-

asher levavo foneh hayom me'im Adonai Eloheinu

today whose heart one day strays from the Holy One our God,

l'lechet l'avod et-elohei ha-goyim hahem

and who goes and serves the gods of those nations.

pen-yesh bachem shoresh poreh rosh v'la'anah

There must not be among you a root whose fruit is gall and wormwood.

[Deuteronomy 29:11,17]

Keep in mind as you read this admonition that in Hebrew thought *a betrothed bride-in-waiting is just as responsible for fidelity to her Beloved Bridegroom as is a bride*. So Moshe passionately urges the people standing before him – and us - to both *sh'ma the Holy One's words* and *to remain ever passionate toward and faithful to our God and Bridegroom*. He wants the bride-to-be to be *found faithful when the Bridegroom appears*. He does not want the Bridegroom to find His Betrothed in the arms of another lover. He does not want her to settle for inferior pleasures. He does not want her to waste the precious gifts of life-breath, the capacities of cognitive thought and meaningful speech, and relational influence.

Do not let the false gods of this age seduce you, Dear Reader! The cultural gods of materialism, of uncontrolled sensuality, of self-expression, of political action, of philosophy and of institutional religion will call to you. They will say you don't know what you are missing. They will offer you toys, trash and trinkets – and demand your destiny in return. They will promise you money, ecstatic experience, self-actualization, power, knowledge, holy water and smoke – and give you only disappointment, disillusionment, despair, and death. You are called to something much, much more glorious than any of the gods of your neighbors – or all of them together - can offer. You are called to walk with the Creator of the Universe, and love and be loved by Him, and to experience the joy of assisting Him in extending His Kingdom into every encounter, every interaction, every relationship, every situation, and every circumstance He places within your sphere of influence.

The Thin Line Between History and Prophecy

The words Moshe speaks beginning with verse 16 sound like a *warning of a future*

event. To the people gathered on the plains of Moav, they were just that³. But we live on the other side of history. From our vantage point on *this side of history* can see that Moshe's words were also a *prophecy*. Moshe's words prophesied what happened to the 'ten Northern Tribes' who apostatized from the Jerusalem-centered faith, built altars in their territories [the most famous of which were at Dan and Bethel], and mixed the worship of the Holy One with the worship of the Kena'ani gods Ba'al, Ashterah, and Molech. What happened, as we all know from history, is that the territories of those ten Northern tribes were laid waste, and they were carried off by the Assyrians into captivity. Moshe's words also prophesied what happened a few short generations later to the Southern tribes, who repeated the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom despite due warning, and went into captivity themselves, such that for almost 2,000 years – until our generation - the land of Israel was a virtually uninhabited wasteland.

As you read these words of Moshe, therefore, feel their prophetic impact in your spirit. Enter into the text, Dear Reader, and see and experience the devastation it predicts *as if you were having a nightmare*. And then *awaken, O Sleeper!* Heed the warning Moshe Avinu is giving us, and draw closer to the Holy One. Hide yourself in the Shadow of His Wings. What Moshe is warning against in these verses is, after all, clearly identified. The unmistakable reality Moshe is dealing with is the fact that the Holy One's people have encountered – even lived in the midst of – peoples who worship other gods, who live a pagan lifestyle, and who have *a pagan mindset*.

As it happened to the generation that stood physically before Moshe on the plains of Moav, so it has happened to us. The pagan cultures we in this generation have encountered and lived in midst of are called by different names today – names like 'America', and 'Europe', and 'Africa', and "Asia", and 'Australia' – but they present the exact same challenges as the pagan cultures of Egypt and Kena'an [Canaan]. We need to understand the vast difference between the pagan approach to life that we are to eschew at all costs and the *sh'ma* lifestyle of Torah, which we are to follow all the days of our lives. Sometimes the distinctions between the two ways of approaching life can seem to get blurred in the context of current events, secular education and entertainment media, and institutional religious hype. Do not let this happen to you. Do not mix and mingle the precious Torah of the Holy One with humanistic philosophies, with secular value systems, or with institutionalized forms of religious expression. The consequences can be deadly.

³ Moshe was acting as a "watchman", blowing the shofar for us, as described in our meditation aliyah for today – **Ezekiel 33:1-5**. It is up to us to heed the shofar Moshe has sounded.

The Clash Between the Pagan Mindset and the Sh'ma Lifestyle

The essence of the pagan approach to life, you see, is the ***intellectual belief in a supernatural being or beings, coupled with a desire to manipulate and control that being, or those beings, by human action.*** The first part of the pagan approach to life – belief in a ‘higher power’ - ‘sounds’ good. The second part, however – the *desire to manipulate and control that higher power by human action* - is sometimes very hard to see. And that is how the ‘trap’ usually gets sprung.

The pagan mindset, you see, is present not only in primitive societies, but can be found prospering in many cities and villages –and in Christian churches and Jewish synagogues for that matter - in the modern world in which we live. The pagan mindset is, after all, simply a mindset that, while it acknowledges that a god [or gods] exists, wants *as much human activity and interaction, and as little involvement with the deity or deities in question, as a person can get.* The pagan mindset is a mindset which wants to ‘buy off’ the god [or gods] with sacrifices, and services, and, in some cases, forms of religion – all of which focus on activities originating in the human mind. The pagan mindset is a mindset which wants to pay clergymen [i.e. priests, shamans] to do ‘spiritual stuff’ to keep the god [or gods] happy and ‘on our side’. The pagan mindset is a mindset that believes that if their priests and shamans do enough ‘spiritual stuff’ and get it ‘right’, the god [gods] will be happy - and will *leave the people alone to live their lives the way they want.*

The Great Contrast

The *sh'ma* lifestyle described in Torah, on the other hand, is very, very different. The *sh'ma* lifestyle has very little to do with an intellectual belief in a Supreme Being. As Ya'akov [James] said, *Do you believe in God? You do well. The demons also believe, and tremble. James 2:19.*

The ***sh'ma*** lifestyle outlined in the Torah is not about believing in God. It is instead all about knowing, and pursuing, communicating with, and seeking the Face of, and surrendering to the Will of, the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov. The *sh'ma* lifestyle is not about manipulating God to do what we want Him to do. It is, instead, about yielding every aspect of our lives to Him, to do with us, and in us, and through us, whatever He wants to do. The *sh'ma* lifestyle is not about getting ‘god’ [or ‘the gods’] *to leave us alone* so we can live our lives and do our thing. It is instead about *developing a lifelong relationship* with the Creator of the Universe, about *getting closer and closer to Him*, and about *becoming more and more like Him every day that the precious breath of life remains in us.*

Pagan influenced minds, you see, want God to bless *what men do*; the Torah way, on the other hand, is for men to have a very real encounter with, and *surrender*

their will to, the Holy One.

Know Him Before Whom You Stand

A *very real encounter with the Creator of the Universe? Seriously?* Oh yes Beloved. Seriously. Moshe begins this very pivotal parsha of Torah with a dramatic declaration. He says:

Atem Nitzavim ha-yom kuleichem

Today you are all standing

L'fnei Adonai Eloheichem

before the Face of the Holy One your God.

[Deuteronomy 29:9]

There are certain statements in the Torah that are designed to make the human heart *tremble*. The statement quoted above is one of those statements. Do you really understand what it means *to stand before the Face of the Holy One our God?* Do you really comprehend the magnitude of *the door in Heaven* that Moshe is opening for us? Do you really *know* Him before whom you stand? Moshe does. Moshe has spoken with the Holy One face-to-Face for many, many years. Moshe has stood in the cleft of a rock, as all the Holy One's goodness passed by. Moshe has been taught the Holy One's ways, and has been shown the Holy One's glory. And Moshe's greatest wish for us is not that we would believe all the right doctrines, or even do all the right stuff. His greatest wish for us is that we would know the Holy One the way he has come to know Him.

So, much more than just giving us a list of do's and don'ts Moshe wants us all to look into and be transformed by the Holiness of the Great King. He wants us to have a 'God-encounter'. And so, quite to our surprise, the aging prophet has arranged one. Look up Dear One! Even now, we are all *standing before the Face of the Holy One our God*.

Moshe intends, I suspect, to make us identify with our ancestor Ya'akov the morning after his famous 'stairway to Heaven' dream, when he awoke in awe and said: ***Surely the Holy One is in this place, and I did not know it. Genesis 28:16.*** Moshe is, after all, the 'Friend of the Bridegroom'. He is part *shadchan* [matchmaker] and part 'best man'. He intends, before he leaves the planet, to *take our hand, if we decide to offer it, place that hand in the Hand of the Bridegroom of Heaven, and bless us as we go our way.* He wants more than our *attention*. He wants more than our *respect*. He wants more than our *obedience*. He wants a *covenantal commitment* from us. Hence he says:

***[Come] ... all men of Israel,
[come] with your little ones and with your wives—
[come] also with the foreigners who are in your camp,***

*even the ones who cut your wood and the ones who draw your water —
[come] and enter into covenant with the Holy One your God, and enter into His oath,
which the Holy One your God makes with you today,
that He may establish you today as a people for Himself,
and that He may be God to you,
just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers,
to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov.
[Deuteronomy 29:10-13]*

It suddenly becomes clear. What Moshe has been doing, unbeknownst to us, while we thought he was simply teaching us Torah, was *arranging a chuppah for us* here where we stand - much as the Holy One arranged a *chuppah* for our fathers at Sinai. It appears Moshe never tires of playing *the role of the Friend of the Bridegroom*. And it appears the Holy One never tires of playing *the role of the Bridegroom*. As a Bridegroom, He is here, even now ... standing ... smiling ... *waiting*. Today it is *you* He is waiting for, *Beloved*. It is almost time to *make your decision*. Will you *drink His Cup*? Will you *eat His Bread*? Will you *share His Mission, His Journeys, and His Purposes*?

Do not answer yet. Before you decide whether you are willing to commit to that step – or are going to back away as our fathers did at Sinai - there is *one more important matter of which* you should be aware.

What Will Happen to Those of the Holy One's People Who Leave the Sh'ma Pathway and Adopt Instead a Pagan Approach to Life?

Moshe has spent several parshot showing us a series of striking either-or vignettes that describe what will happen to us depending upon whether we choose the Bridegroom's pathway, on the one hand, or the Path of the Runaway Bride, on the other hand. He has not simply warned us against *becoming pagans*. He has also cautioned us that the commitment he is calling upon us to make is a TOTAL COMMITMENT. He has spent whole chapters teaching us to avoid *spiritual shatnetz* – *i.e. the mixing our Torah walk with pagan ideas, philosophies, and practices*. There is no escaping it - oil and water *just do not mix*. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. **James 4:4**. As the Master taught: *No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9:61*.

In this precipitous moment, therefore - as he prepares to call upon us for our decision as to which pathway we will follow - Moshe wants us to know the realities we are going to face – and to *count the cost*. **Luke 14:28**.

Having all that in mind, please read carefully what Moshe says will be the Holy One's reaction to anyone who, though having committed to live a *sh'ma* lifestyle, ultimately changes his or her mind and adopts instead a *pagan approach* to life:

*The Holy One will not pardon him;
Instead, the passion of the Holy One and his jealousy will smoke against that man.
All the curse that is written in this book shall lie on him,
and the Holy One will blot out his name from under the sky.*

*Out of all the tribes of Yisra'el the Holy One will set him apart to evil
according to all the curses [arar'im] of the covenant
that is written in this book of Torah.*

[Deuteronomy 29:20-21]

Are you **trembling** yet, Beloved? Moshe is not finished. Read on:

*The generation to come, your children who will rise up after you,
and the foreigner who will come from a far land,
will say, when they see the plagues of that land,
and the sicknesses with which the Holy One has made it sick;
[and that] the whole land of it is sulfur, and salt, [and] a burning,
[that] it is not sown, nor bears, nor any grass grows therein,
like the overthrow of S'dom and G'morrah, Admah and Tzevoyim,
which the Holy One overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:
even all the nations shall say, 'Why has the Holy One done thus to this land?
what means the heat of this great anger?'*

*Then men will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the Holy One,
the God of their fathers,
which he made with them when he brought them forth
out of the land of Mitzrayim,
and went and served other gods, and worshiped them,
gods that they didn't know, and that he had not given to them:
therefore the zeal of the Holy One was kindled against this land,
to bring on it all the curse that is written in this book;
and the Holy One rooted them out of their land in passion, and in wrath,
and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as at this day.'*

[Deuteronomy 29:20-28]

Gulp!!! What a *warning!* And alas, for our ancestors, this solemn warning proved *all too prophetic* of what would happen. First the two and a half tribes who settled East of the Jordan, then the 'ten northern tribes', and finally, the Southern Tribes of Y'hudah and Benjamin apostatized [though a few from each remained faithful] and adopted the pagan approach to life, exited the Garden Path of blessedness that comes from walking intimately with the Holy One, saw their land afflicted, suffered defeat at the hands of their enemies, and were carried away into captivity. Ah, but the Holy One still has a plan.

***The Majority Eventually Apostatize -
But There is Always A Faithful Remnant Who Sh'ma's***

There will always be those who do choose the Pathway of the Runaway Bride. In fact, those who make that choice will generally be far greater in number than those

who choose the Bridegroom's Garden Path. Choose the Bridegroom-King and His Way anyway. The majority has nothing we need. If we go along with them, we will have nothing significant to offer them either.

We need to accept at the outset that we will never be able to control what the majority of people in our assigned spheres of influence think, say, or do. Please understand that about 'other people'. They always have a *much larger circle*. We are not even supposed to control them. We are to love them. We are to forgive them. We are to model the King's Ways and Wisdom for them. But we are not their mother, their Holy Spirit, or their Savior. The majority will *always* choose the way of the flesh and of the world – and there is nothing we can do to stop them if that is what they let stir their heart.

The majority, Torah informs us, always *runs to do evil*. It is a *fact of spiritual life*. But the Holy One will not be left without a witness. The Holy One has ordained that He will always have, even in the midst of a corrupt majority, a *faithful remnant*. The remnant I am talking about is not a 'spiritual elite' whose members think they are better than everyone else. The remnant I am talking about is simply a bunch of ordinary people who heed a special call from above to not only weep for their own sins *but also to weep for the sins of the majority* who run to do evil. The remnant I am referring to is just a people who hold fast to Torah [as taught by Messiah] believing Torah's light, lived out humbly by even a few, will shine into the majority's darkness – and call those who long for a deeper walk with the Holy One out, into the Light. The remnant suffers from neither *illusions of grandeur* nor *feelings of self-importance*. The remnant knows that it is not the Light – and merely has the great privilege and honor of *bearing witness to the Light*. The remnant knows full well that One is coming of whom it is not worthy to unloose the thongs of His sandals⁴.

Sh'ma! The shofar is sounding⁵. It is almost time for *mikveh* in the Jordan. And *mikveh* in the Jordan always means a new beginning.

The Secret Things ... And the Things Revealed

Even as Moshe passionately laid out his warning to the young men and women standing before him on the plains of Moab the Holy One knew full well what was

⁴ This reference is to the words of Yochanan the Immerser [John the Baptist], when he was challenged by the religious leaders of his time for calling people to *mikveh* in the Jordan River, instead of at Herod's Temple. Yochanan called people to go back to Torah basics -to the 'beginnings' of the nation - at the Jordan River. He was calling all Israel back to the place Moshe had them standing in today's aliyah.

⁵ In preparation for *Rosh HaShanah* [Biblically known as *Yom Teruah*], which will occur next week, it is traditional among the faithful to blow the shofar, read Psalm 27 aloud, and recite prayers of repentance [*Selichot*] each evening until the *moed* [appointed time].

going to happen with them. He knew that their hearts – and the hearts of their children after them – would eventually turn away from Him and His Covenant. What He knew was going to happen, though *the natural consequence of real choices made in real time by real men*, would all work together to form part of a *great mystery*. Their apostasy would become an integral component part of *the Secret Strategy of the Holy One for the redemption not just of Israel, but of all mankind who wills to be redeemed*.

The Holy One knew full well that those who made declarations of submission to the Holy One's Will on the '*this day*' [Hebrew *ha-yom hazeh*] of parshot **Ki Tavo** and **Nitzavim** would be seduced by other ways, other gods, other values, other interests, once they settled in their lands and were weaned off of Manna and could no longer 'draft' off of Moshe's passion. And while the Holy One *grieved for the individuals involved*, and *wept over the consequences each would bear*, He was not deterred or distressed in the least concerning His Plan.

Whatever His people chose to do once they were in the land, you see, the ultimate reality would be that His Will would be done. If [I should say 'when'] they apostatized (keep in mind that there was always and will always be a faithful remnant that endures to serve a witness on the Holy One's behalf) - and He knew they would – He would scatter them among the nations of the world, like a farmer scatters seed. He would, in the latter days – the days of Harvest – call them back to Him. And He knew that when they returned from all the nations to which He had scattered them they would *bring the foreigners, the woodcutters, and the water carriers, and their sons and daughters, with them*. This is the mystery of the Holy One. It is the wonderful truth of the Holy One's End-time plan.

Hence Moshe closes today's aliyah with a hymn of praise to the Holy One, who works all things – even our unfaithfulness – together for good to those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose:

Ha-nistarot l'Adonai Eloheinu

The secret things belong to the Holy One our God;

V'ha-niglot lanu

but the things that are revealed belong to us

ulevaneinu ad-olam

and to our children forever,

la'asot et-kol-divrei ha-torah hazot

that we may do all the words of this Torah.

[Deuteronomy 29:29]

It is not our task or purpose in life to bring about the 'secret things' of the Holy

One – that is the task of the Bridegroom. Our task is to deal with ‘*the things that are revealed*’, and to ‘*do* [Hebrew, *asah*]⁶ *all the words of this Torah*’.

Questions for Today’s Study

1. Why was the Redeemed Community standing in solemn assembly before the Holy One at this particular time and place? [See verses 12-13]
2. In verse 10 [9 in some Bibles] Moshe makes it clear that more must be done with Torah than just hearing, reading, or studying it. He says:

Keep [Hebrew, *sh’mar*] ***therefore the words of this covenant,***
and do [Hebrew, *asah*] ***them, that you may prosper in all that you do.***
[Deuteronomy 28:9]

[A] What things does Moshe say God’s people are to do with the Torah?

[B] Look up in Strong’s and Gesenius the two verbs Moshe uses in this verse to describe what is to be done with the Torah [Hebrew Word #8104, *sh’mar* – *shin, mem, resh*, and Hebrew Word #6213, *asah* – *ayin, shin, hey*]. Write these two Hebrew verbs in Hebrew letters with appropriate vowel markings; then look up at least their first usages in Torah; then describe the Hebraic word picture each presents.

3. This covenant was not just renewed with natural descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov, or just with people alive on that day. Read verses 10-12 and 14-15 carefully. With what groups of people *besides natural Israel* did the Holy One renew covenant in this passage?

4. The seventh and last of the seven ancient “*haftarot of consolation*” is Isaiah 61. In Isaiah 61:10-11 the prophet *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] touches on the wedding theme as has Moshe in today’s aliyah from Nitzavim. Before we look at Yeshayahu’s words, remember that Yeshua our Messiah spoke a parable about a wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14. Look at that parable. At that feast, a man came in who was *not dressed in a wedding garment*. What kind garment exactly was it that the man was not wearing? That is the subject of Yeshayahu’s prophecy today. Yeshayahu describes the wedding garment to be worn when we are summoned to *nitzavim* at the great wedding of Messiah.

I will greatly rejoice in the Holy One; my soul shall be joyful in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

⁶ 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.

*as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the eretz brings forth its bud,
and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth;
so the Holy One GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth
before all the nations.*

[A] With what two “garments” does Isaiah say the Holy One has covered His Redeemed?

[B] With what did “a priest” adorn his head? [See Exodus 28:36-38; Revelation 7:3; 14:1; and 22:4]

[C] With what was a bride to adorn herself? [See Revelation 21:9-21].

[D] What two things will the Holy One make “spring up” before all the nations? In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words used to describe these things, and write those words and their meanings.

5. The letter we have come to know as Colossians is the result of a consultation between Shaul of Tarsus and a talmid named Epafrus. Shaul’s purpose in writing the letter was apparently to refute whatever heretical teaching was going around in Colossae in c. 60 C.E. that prompted Epafrus’ visit. But in the aliyah we read this week, Shaul is not addressing heresy directly. He is, instead, describing the ‘bridal garments’ the Holy One’s people are to wear. Here is how our reading for parsha *Nitzavim* begins:

*Put on therefore, as the Holy One’s elect, holy and beloved,
a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance ...*

List all the wedding “garments” which Shaul [Paul] tells us to put on in Colossians 3:12.

*May you be fully dressed in the righteousness that Yeshua wore -- the righteousness of Torah.
And may you wear your wedding garments for all the nations to see.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Ezekiel 33:1-5

*The word of the Holy One came to me, saying,
Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and tell them,
‘When I bring the sword on a land, and the people of the land
take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman;
if, when he sees the sword come on the land,
he blows the shofar, and warns the people;
then whoever hears the sound of the shofar, and doesn’t take warning,
if the sword come, and take him away,*

his blood shall be on his own head.

*He heard the sound of the shofar, and didn't take warning;
his blood shall be on him; whereas if he had taken warning,
he would have delivered his soul.*