

Introduction to Parsha #52: Vayalech¹

Readings: ***Torah Vayalech:*** **Deuteronomy 31:1-30**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 55:6 – 56:8**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 7:7-14**



Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid
 [Deuteronomy 31:6]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 6th Petition, *B'racha* [The Prayer for Blessing]

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

Our epic tale has reached its crescendo. The Creator's ambitious agenda has been revealed for all to see. The purpose of life has been explained. The narrow pathway to redemption for mankind as a species and for restoration for earth as an ecosystem has been mapped out for us. The invitation to participate in the greatest enterprise that mankind could ever experience has been issued. The risks and rewards of any misusing the precious gifts of life breath, heart rhythm, brain function, and Divine Guidance have been laid forth with specificity. It is now time for the exhausted narrator's epilogue; it is now time to back in Moshe's sweet farewell.

The Epilogue Of Moshe's Magnum Opus

With the challenge to *bacharta ha-chay'im* [choose life] laid out clearly and artfully, Moshe can now breathe a deep sigh. What more is there to say or do? Now, the Holy One must increase – and he must decrease. As the curtain of the parsha opens Torah wants us to know that there is movement afoot. We have somewhere to be. We all have an appointment with our Creator – and a new phase of deployment - to prepare for. We've been sitting, studying, navel-gazing, and talking amongst

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ourselves too long. It is time to put feet to the revelation. The parsha therefore begins with, and takes its essence from, the phrase - *Vayelech*². - [And he walked ...].

Have You Chosen Life and Good – or Death and Calamity?

The sages teach that *Yom Teruah* is the anniversary of the 6th day of the Creation week, when we are commemorating the Holy One's precious gift of personally *breathing/downloading a portion of His own eternal life-force* into the nostrils of man, causing Adam to become not merely a *nefesh* (living creature), but a *nish'mat chayim* [giver/impartor of life at expanding levels]. **Genesis 2:7**. On the anniversary of this event, the sages teach, the Holy One causes every descendant of Adam to pass under the Holy One's *Shepherd's Rod*, give a personal account of what he/she has done in the preceding year with the gift of Divine breath, undergo inspection of all aspects of our lives, submit to Divine discipline, and seek Divine course correction.

Why is such an 'annual accounting' necessary? Why can't we just appear before the Creator once, at the end of our life, or perhaps even put it off until the end of the age? The answer is that we require regular COVENANT RE-ALIGNMENT to thrive. We need an impetus to RETURN, RETUNE, and RECENTERING. As each year of earth's existence provides a new *growing season*, so each year of our lives involves new opportunities – and new challenges. Are you ready for the upgrade, Dear Reader? Fear not, for as Moshe reminds us: *Adonai Eloheicha hu over l'faneicha* - *The Holy One your God, He is crossing over before you!* **Deuteronomy 31:3a/**

Have You Chosen Life and Good – or Death and Calamity?

As we prepare to pass under the shepherd's rod each year, the Holy One has ordained that Moshe's invitation to embrace the call of the Holy One to full, mature, productive, abundant, meaningful, and societally impactful, *shalom-asah*-ing life will be reverberating in our spirits and echoing through our souls. Over every hill and vale we travel, around every corner we approach, with every breeze that touches our skin, the Holy One wants us to hear the ancient prophet's lilting voice accosting us, challenging us, urging us to RETURN AGAIN TO OUR TRUE IDENTITY, CALLING, MISSION, AND PURPOSE. He wants the wizened face of Moshe to be constantly appearing before our eyes. He wants us to feel the prophet staring into our souls, diligently searching for any sign that we are even considering making the response the Bridegroom-King of Heaven desires and deserves. He wants to be sure that we understand that there will always be two pathways diverging before us - one of which will lead to *abundant life* and a heritage of *goodness*, and the other which will lead us into a *death spiral* and wave

² In Hebrew, *Vayelech* is written **וַיֵּלֶךְ** - i.e. *vav, yod, lamed, kaf sofit*. The verb root is *yalak*, meaning to go forth, especially on foot.

after wave of *calamity*. He implores us to weigh the options, count the cost, and choose the *wise path*.

As Moshe phrased the exhortation in *Nitzavim*, today is the day to ***Choose life, that we and our seed may live!*** The prophet wants a commitment from us – and he wants it now. He knows the pain and grief it will cost us – and our families - if we delay. So he will not relent. The Bridegroom-King – the Glorious One on Whose behalf he presented the challenge in the first place – will not let him. Thus we find that in the midst of every activity of life this time of year we encounter the prophet whispering in our ears the Bridegroom-King’s call to reject and/or renounce the pathway of the Runaway Bride once and for all. Wherever we go and whatever we do these last few days of Summer all Creation keeps echoing Moshe’s challenge – even as it groans in eager expectation for someone somewhere to take a *Nachson’s leap*³ in response to the Holy One’s ultimate challenge, and begin to chart a fresh new life-course along the narrow but indescribably beautiful Pathway the Bridegroom has blazed and marked off for His Bride.

The Bridegroom’s Pathway – also known as the ‘Pilgrim’s Pathway’ - is the Torah. It is after all, the flowing current of His Life-Breath – and it is only His Life-Breath that can create in this fallen world of serpent-speak an atmosphere conducive to real life. And so we will continue to meditate on and consider the ramifications of accepting or rejecting the prophet’s dramatic challenge as we prepare our hearts and households for the Divine Appointments of *Yom T’ruah* [the ‘Feast of Trumpets’], *Yom Kippur*⁴ [the Day of Atonement], and *Chag ha-Sukkot*⁵ [the ‘Feast of Tabernacles’].

Every day this time of year as we lie down and as we rise up, as we sit in our homes and as we walk along the way the prophet confronts us and demands our answer to the ultimate challenge of direction. The sages teach, you see, that ***Yom T’ruah*** is the anniversary of the creation of man – the sixth day of the Creation week – the day on which the Holy One first *breathed life* into the nostrils of man causing him to become a ‘*living soul*’. **Genesis 2:7**. On the anniversary of man’s creation, it is said by the sages, the Holy One has ordained that every descendant of Adam is to make an ‘annual accounting’ of sorts. Every man/woman is said to pass

³ According to tradition Nachson of the tribe of Judah was the first Hebrew to take the risk of stepping off of dry land into the bed of the Sea of Reeds even with columns of water hundreds of feet high threatening from both sides.

⁴ In the year of this writing *Yom Kippur* – the Day of when the Holy One has promised to ‘appear in the cloud above the mercy seat’ – is predicted to begin at Sundown on Wednesday, September 22, 2015. See Leviticus 23:26-32 and Leviticus 16:1-34, where the Holy One’s own Voice gives specific instructions and protocols relating to how He wants us to participate in this Divine Appointment.

⁵ In the year of this writing *Chag ha-Sukkot* – the joyous 7-day feast of Tabernacles – is predicted to begin at sundown on Sunday, September 27, 2015. See Leviticus 23:33-44, where the Holy One’s own Voice gives instructions relating to how He wants us to participate in this Divine Appointment.

under the Holy One's Shepherd's Rod on *Yom T'ruah*, to give a personal account of what he/she has done not only with the gift of the breath of life but also what he/she has done with his/her 'talent' [See Y'shua's parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30; see also Luke 19:12-27] in the preceding year.

Now perhaps you see that Moshe's *Choose life* challenge colors and infuses everything either Torah itself or the traditions of our fathers compel us to do this day. The critical pendency of the 'choose life' challenge is the reason for the *shofar* blasts of *Yom T'ruah*, for the fast and complete Sabbath of *Yom Kippur*, and for the departing from our homes and taking in hand of the myrtle, the palm, the willow and the citron on *Chag ha-Sukkot*.

'Choose life' is the essential theme of the seventh Biblical month. It is with the 'choose life' challenge in mind that we begin our study of *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!

A Vayalech Travelogue

With the great *bacharta ha-chay'im* [choose life] challenge to all mankind laid out clearly and artfully, Moshe will breathe a deep sigh. Now, the Holy One must increase – and Moshe must decrease. *So* in parsha *Vayakhel* Moshe will turn his attention to getting his affairs in order, and preparing for his imminent departure. He declares up front:

Ben-me'ah v'esrim shanah anochi hayom

'I am one hundred twenty years old this day;

lo-uchal od latzet v'lavo

I will no more go out and come in.

[Deuteronomy 31:2]

Moshe's allotted time on earth, residing in a mortal body, was rapidly drawing to a close. The man who spoke with the Bridegroom-King as a man speaks to his friend understands and accepts that when he 'goes out' this time, he will not be returning to his tent.

120 Years Young [Deuteronomy 31:2]

Despite the imminence of the phenomenon of the 'death' of the body, the 'new' Moshe is so thoroughly immersed in the Presence and empowering words of the Holy One that his body was neither *tired*, nor *sick*, or weakened. His strength is not abated in the slightest. Why then is his earthly tabernacle about to go still and

quiet? Because his work on earth is done. All he was sent to earth to do he has done. The only things he has left to release – his farewell song, his final blessing, his parting impartation, and the scrolls of Divine Revelation that have flowed from Heaven’s Throne Room through his hands – will all be delivered before the setting of the sun. What more is there to accomplish? Moshe’s leg of the great relay race has been run. The only question now is who will take the baton for the next leg.

Take Me To Your Leader [Deuteronomy 31:3(a), 4-6]

Moshe will then make it clear that the real shepherd over the flock of Israel has always been – and will always be – the Holy One. ***The Holy One your God Himself will cross over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and enable you to dispossess them.*** The prodigy of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov are to put their trust in, *sh’ma*, and *follow* the Bridegroom-King, not men. While the Bridegroom-King will raise up men to act in His Stead from time to time – as He has done with Moshe – He will never abdicate His ultimate authority or Covenantal Responsibility to, nor share His glory with, those men.

Heaven Will Not Be Left Without a Witness
[Deuteronomy 31:3(b), 7-8, 23]

While Moshe will not cross over the Yarden with the Redeemed Community, they will not cross over alone. As the Bridegroom-King promised back in Numbers 27:15-23, Y’hoshua, son of Nun, will cross over with them in Moshe’s place. Moshe will charge Y’hoshua this day, in the sight of all Yisrael: ***Chizku v’imtzu al-tir’u*** [*i.e. be strong and of good courage, and do not be afraid!*] Emboldened by this prophetic empowerment, Y’hoshua is to lead the people to the land of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov, and is to cause them to inherit that land. Will he be up to the challenge? Will the people? Will we?

Finishing the Scroll of Torah
[Deuteronomy 31:9, 24-29]

Moshe then becomes the ghostwriter of all ghostwriters. ***Vayichtov Moshe et-ha-torah hazot*** [*i.e. Then Moshe wrote down this Torah*], we are told.

Incredible! Think what it would be like to be the scribe commissioned to write the Creator of the Universe’s Autobiography – to record for posterity a Masterpiece of Revelation and Literature that absolutely changes the world and its inhabitants forever. With what level of trembling would you close the scroll? With what kind of emotion would you put down the pen and walk away? With what level of reverence would you entrust it to others for safekeeping?

The Final Mitzvah of Torah – Ha-K’hel
[Deuteronomy 31:10-13]

Moshe does not want the people of the Covenant to forget one word of the Torah – or lose one *yod* or *vav* from the revelation download – that he has had the honor of

mediating. Moshe knows that the Torah he has written is mission critical for the sons and daughters of the Most High God. He knows it is essential to the Holy One's Grand Redemptive Plan for Mankind and Creation. He knows it is the Torah that the Holy One intends to use to reveal the Bridegroom-King's Character and Ways to the world, and to define the nature, essence, and behavior of His People in all generations. It is therefore not by any means pride in Moshe's part in writing the Great Masterpiece that is the Torah that makes Moshe insist the scroll he has written be read by the Holy One's people over and over again forever. What makes him insist that this repetition according to cycles take place is an awestruck heart set atremble with the understanding of the world-changing power of the revelation stream he has been called upon to record. Moshe therefore charges the *kohanim* that every seven years in the course of the celebration of *Chag Ha-Sukkot* [i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles], the entire Torah is to be read in the hearing of every man, woman, and child - every native-born Hebrew and every foreigner who joins himself to the Remnant of the Redeemed. He explains that they are to make sure this occurs in order ***that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Holy One your God and carefully observe all the words of this Torah.***

Moshe's Penultimate God-Encounter
[Deuteronomy 31:14-21]

The last 40 years of Moshe's life have consisted of one God-encounter after another. He now knows the Voice of the Bridegroom-King better than his own. He has, over the past four decades, spent far more time conversing with the Creator of the Universe than he has with human beings – even the members of his own family. It should come as no surprise that he will have a God-encounter on the last day of his life.

The narrative of this penultimate God-encounter begins with the Hebrew phrase ***Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe ...*** [i.e. and the Holy One said to Moshe ...]. Yes, the Creator of the Universe is speaking again. He is speaking to Moshe as a man speaks with his friend. *Selah!* The substance of this encounter will be an invitation. Moshe will be invited to come into the Mish'kan one last time – and to bring Y'hoshua with him. And then the experience will go from verbal to visual. The Bridegroom-King will not just speak – He will take on physical form and appear to Moshe and Y'hoshua ***ba'ohel b'amud anan*** [i.e. in the tent, in the pillar of cloud]. This will not take place secretly inside the 'holy of holies'. It will take place in full view of all the people - at the entrance to the *Mish'kan*. Then the Holy One will speak again, revealing prophetically to Moshe that after his death the people will leave the Torah lifestyle he has taught them for a long season, during which they start worshipping and serving the gods of the Kena'ani. The Holy One warns Moshe and Y'hoshua of the consequences of this great falling away.

Receiving the Download of the Prophetic Song of the Ages
[Deuteronomy 31:22, 30]

Moses will receive the vision for, and write down the words of, the greatest song ever penned. Before the day is through he will also go out and sing the song in the hearing of every person in every tribe. The Holy One will then instruct Moshe: ***v'atah kitvu lachem et-ha-shirah hazot*** [i.e. write for yourselves this song] and ***lamdah et-b'nei-Yisrael*** [i.e. teach it to the Children of Israel]. The song will be reproduced in its entirety in next week's parsha, *Ha'azinu*.

*Moshe's Delivery of the Scroll of Torah –
to the Levi'im, and to All Future Generations of Humankind*
[Deuteronomy 31:24-29]

Moshe will then take the freshly concluded Torah scroll and entrust it into the custody of the Levi'im. He will instruct them to place the scroll inside the *aron ha-kodesh* – i.e. the holy ark. This is, of course, the same depository that contains the Tablets of Testimony, the rod of Aharon, and the testimonial jar of manna. The parsha will conclude with the charge of Moshe to the Levi'im, and his warning before the two witnesses – i.e. *the Heavens* and *the Earth* - of the great apostasy to come.

A Brief Look at Haftarah Vayalech
Isaiah 55:6 – 56:8

In order that we may know our assigned role in cooperation with the Holy One's great Plan of Redemption for Mankind and Creation the haftarah this week will instruct us:

***Seek the Holy One while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to YHVH, and He will have mercy on him;
And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.***

[Isaiah 55:6-7]

Let us *seek Him indeed, Dear Reader!* Let us go up together, and *call upon Him* – in the days of Awe! Let us forsake all the wicked ways that have seduced us into compromise. Let us forsake as well the polluted ways of thinking generated by our Fallen human minds.

Come, let us make *teshuvah* like the prodigals we are – and return to the ever merciful, ever loving, ever wise Father, Shepherd, Bridegroom and King! For the prophet promises us, on behalf of our Bridegroom-King, that when we return to Him and to Torah after the great apostasy: ***you will go out in joy, and be led forth in singing; and all the trees of forest will clap their hands.*** Isaiah 55:12.

The Apostolic Writings We Will Study this Week **Romans 7:7-14**

This week's apostolic message is drawn from Shaul's letter to the people in Rome who have discovered and follow the Messiah. Shaul addresses the recipients of his letter as: *all who are in Rome, beloved of the Holy One, called to be k'doshim*". [Romans 1:7]. Shaul is therefore writing to people who know the Book of Exodus, and who for that reason understand what it means to be the beloved of the Holy One, *and who also know the book of Leviticus*, and who for that reason understand what it means to be *called to be k'doshim*.

In the section of Shaul's letter to the Messianic branch of the Torah community in Rome Shaul is going to talk a lot about the purpose of something our English Bibles call 'law'. The Greek word our English Bibles translate as 'law' is *nomos*. What is *nomos*? In using the Greek term in his epistle to the Romans does Shaul mean to refer to the Holy Torah of the Holy One as revealed in the first five books of the Bible? Most Christian commentators have in ignorance assumed that every time Shaul uses the Greek word *nomos* in his epistles what he is referring to is the Torah of the Holy One. But this is absurd. *Nomos* is a very, very generic term. It means "*anything established, anything received by usage.*" It can refer to a custom or a law. Those of us who know Torah know that *Torah is neither custom nor law* - it is the loving instruction of a Betrothed Bridegroom for his bride-in-waiting. Is it possible therefore that at least sometimes when Shaul uses the term *nomos* in his epistles what he is referring to is not the Torah of the Holy One at all but the infinite network of man-made traditions, customs, and self-serving rules of religion which had been constructed as walls around the Torah by the various Judaisms of his era⁶?

One of the things Shaul says about *nomos* in the portion of the epistle we read this week is:

Is nomos sin? May it never be!
Notwithstanding, I wouldn't have known sin, except through nomos.
For I wouldn't have known coveting unless nomos had said, "You are not to covet."
[Romans 7:7]

This reference, considered alone, could be deemed to refer to the Torah of the Holy One. After all in Exodus 20:17 the Holy One did indeed speak over His People while He had them gathered under the Sinaitic Chuppah of betrothal the prophetic declaration *Lo Tachmod*, which English speakers interpret as 'you will not covet'⁷.

⁶ I.e. the rabbinical schools of Hillel and Shammai, the teachings of the sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots, etc.

⁷ The Hebrew verb *chamad* means *to desire to take delight or pleasure in something*. In the context of Exodus 20:17 it means *to desire to take delight or pleasure from something belonging to one's neighbor*. The Holy One went on to specifically list the things/persons of our neighbor which we were prophetically

But Shaul could also be referring to the body of traditions built by man around the Torah's empowerment not to be *covetous*. Over the centuries religious men had developed interpretations and traditions regarding what they did and did not consider coveting. Through these instructions and traditions a person born into the times could not receive the Holy One's glorious prophetic empowerment of the Holy One to exercise holiness in the private meditations of one's mind individually – his interpretation of that empowerment was colored by customs, traditions, and laws in which various men had put their own 'spin' on '*lo tachmod*'. The requirement of many ancient cultures that a veil – or a *burqa* - be worn by a woman so men will not see the fullness of her beauty and be attracted to her is an example. The effect of this is to transmute the Holy One's empowerment to keep one's mind and heart free of destructive thoughts and desires into a cultural norm of modesty. This turns the focus completely away from what one allows one's mind to think to what someone else is wearing or how they are behaving. Or does Shaul sometimes use the Greek term *nomos* to refer to the Torah, and other times use that term to refer to the traditions of the various Judaisms of his day?

How are we supposed to know when Shaul is using the Greek word *nomos* to refer to the Torah of the Holy One and when he is using that word to refer to the vast network of man-made traditions the Jewish people of his day were using to avoid actually touching and dealing with the actual words of the Holy One's Torah? Ah, Beloved – that is where the *Ruach HaQodesh* comes in. Do not rely on theology books to tell you. Seek the wisdom of the *Ruach*!

May you be fully dressed in the garments of righteousness that the Master wore.

The Rabbi's son

empowered not to even desire to take delight or pleasure in, namely: his house, his wife, his male or female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything else belonging to him.

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

Petition #6: ***B'racha*** – Blessing

B'rech oleinu Adonai Eloheinu et-hashanah hazot

Bless this year for our us, O Holy One our God

V'et kol mineh t'vuatah l'tovah

that all our plantings may yield a good, fruitful harvest

v'ten b'racha al p'nei ha-adamah

and give a blessing on the face of the earth

v'sabeinu mituveicha

satisfy us with Your bounty

u'varech shanahteinu ka-shonim ha-tovot

and bless our year, so as to make it a banner year

Baruch Atah Adonai m'varech ha-shonim

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Who Blesses the Years