

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Ha'azinu:*** **Deuteronomy 32:1-8**
 Haftarah: **II Samuel 22:1-7**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Revelation 14:1-5**

He is the Rock; His works are perfect. All His ways are just.

[Deuteronomy 32:4]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 33:1-3;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 8th Petition, *Mishpat* [The Petition for Judgment]

Ha'azinu ha-shamayim va'adaberah – Give ear, O Heavens! I will speak ... *v'tish'ma ha-aretz imrei-fi* – and Earth, tune in to/internalize/and live according to the teaching of my mouth. Deuteronomy 32:1.

40 years ago Moshe trembled before a burning bush that seemed to be able to talk. As a result of that experience his entire priority matrix crumbled. His *comfort zone paradigms* shattered. The words he heard emanating from the bush that day changed Moshe's life. With those words the Holy One's plan for fixing the world began to pick up momentum. The crimson stain on Moshe's soul resulting from the blood of the Egyptian whose life he had taken in anger was washed away. But the impact of the thorn bush experience upon Moshe went far deeper than that. Suddenly he knew he had *a reason for being alive*. He had a calling. He had a purpose – and a mission. He had been assigned a part to play in the Creator's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species, bloodline by bloodline, and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom. At last his life – and all his struggles - had meaning. He *caught the fire of the thorn bush* that day, you see - and he has been burning with that fire ever since. The disgraced prince of Egypt has become a courtier of the Kingdom of Heaven. The failed social justice crusader has become a star-crossed lover of his fellow man. For over four decades now he has been modeling for us what it looks like for a human being to be apprehended by His Creator, to pass situation through the spiritual crucible of 'nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done', and to model the *sh'ma, sh'mar, and asah* lifestyle of Torah for everyone to see.

Moshe wants us to know that we, too, have a purpose - a *reason for being alive*. He wants us to know that we, too, have a calling, and that we, too, have been assigned a part to play in the Creator's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species, bloodline by bloodline, and for the Restoration of Creation to its

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intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom. He wants us to know that our life – and all his struggles – as well, have meaning and serve a redemptive purpose. He wants to make sure, before his voice goes silent, that *the fire of the thorn bush* is burning in us as well – and that we, too, are living the lifestyle the Holy One designed for us real time, consistently, despite our obvious human flaws, in front of our families and in each of our assigned spheres of influence.

Understanding Moshe's Prototypical Life-Mission in Its Essential Phases

Moshe's first mission on behalf of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov was to go back to the place he had committed his most despicable sin and stand again before the people in whose eyes he had disgraced himself. He went first to the elders of enslaved Israel and delivered to them the Holy One's declaration of redemptive intent. **Exodus 4:29-31**. Then Moshe had to go to confront the most powerful king on earth – who was not only the steward of Egypt's world empire, but the son of the man whose servant he had once murdered.

To Moshe's surprise however, neither the call to go back to Egypt nor the call to served as Heaven's point man vis-à-vis Pharaoh turned out to be the most difficult part of his life mission. The hardest, most humbling, part of that life mission turned out to be what the Holy One called him to do *in the aftermath of the Exodus*. The most challenging part of Moshe's calling turned out to be keeping his own flesh, emotions, and pseudo-intellect in check, and staying on task, as he led the strange amalgamation of *descendants of the patriarchs of Israel*, on the one hand, and *the mixed multitude of men, women, and children of many nations* that followed him out of Egypt on the other hand, through the desert toward the Promised Land. The encounter with Pharaoh, you see, as intense as it was, only took a few weeks. The task of teaching, rebuking, exhorting, and prophesying to the people the Holy One called forth out of Egypt to serve as His Kingdom of Priests and Light to the Nations, on the other hand, has required Moshe's constant attention and all of his energies for almost 40 years now. Neither patience, gentleness, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, or positivity had ever been Moshe's *forte* before; but finally, as he was getting ready to depart this life ... miracle of miracles, he found himself exhibiting – even *modeling* - *all of those things*.

Faithful to the Calling in All its Phases

Moshe had many mountaintop moments over the course of the last 40 years - but he also saw – and caused - much sorrow. He had many successes; but he also had some very public moments of epic failure. He now *loved much* – but he knew the that was not because of any merit in himself, but was because he *had been forgiven much* – by both the Holy One and by the people he had complained about and

maligned.

So, over the past four decades, Moshe has seen a whole generation of the Holy One's Redeemed Community – a generation that actually heard the Beautiful Voice he knew so well speak words of betrothal and prophetic empowerment over them – turn against the Holy One. He stood helplessly as that generation both refused its manifest destiny and rejected the unspeakably wonderful bridal inheritance it was offered on a silver platter. He has buried and eulogized them all—even his own brother, Aharon, and his sister, Miryam.

Moshe has watched as the Holy One raised up a new generation in place of the former one. He has taught, rebuked, encouraged, and prophesied to that upstart generation with every bit as much, if not more, passion than ever characterized his interactions with Pharaoh. He has overseen the building of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] – the 'scale model' on earth of the Throne Room of Heaven. He has presided over several censuses. He has directed multiple councils of war. He has left a formidable trail of blood, sweat and tears all along the desert floor between Egypt and Mount Nebo. He has not been perfect – but he *has* been *faithful in all the Holy One's house*. And more important than all of this, he has received from the Holy One, and taught Israel – who he knew would eventually teach the world – the precious and eternal Torah of the Holy One.

Now however there are no more speeches for Moshe to give. There are no more sermons for him to preach. There are no more prophecies for him to declare. His work is done. And it is well with his soul. And so he bids us farewell with a *shir* [song].

The Final Song of Moshe

Even though all of Torah is described as a song [Hebrew *shir*], ordinarily the script of the text is flowing and continuous, extending all the way from the right side of the scroll to the left side. The only exception to this we have encountered to this point of Torah was the ***Song of the Sea*** - Exodus 15:1-21. In that part of the scroll we found a very different style of script. In the Song of the Sea, the verses were neatly divided into two parallel columns - something like a modern printer would use. The style of the final 'Song of Moshe' in the original Hebrew, we now find, resembles not the standard Torah text we have been studying, which flows all the way across the page, but the unique columnar format of the Song of the Sea.

This points out the difference between Hebrew poetry and English poetry. In English poetry the emphasis is on *rhyme* and *meter*. In Hebrew poetry, however, the rhyming is not of *words* but of *visual images*. The emphasis is on *connecting*

images together. Think of the movie/play ‘*Fiddler on the Roof*’. Do you remember the main character, Tevye’s, continuous use of the phrase ‘*on the other hand ...*’ That is a classical example of a classic feature of Hebrew poetry sometimes called *parallelism*. By considering something on the one hand, then reconsidering on the other hand, Tevye, like Moshe, used words to connect images in classical Hebrew style.

The prevalence of parallelism as a mode of expression is perhaps the primary feature that characterizes a Hebrew text as a *shir* [pilgrim’s anthem; prodigal’s ballad]. Hebrew *shir'im* [songs] are built upon the poetic juxtaposition of symmetrically constructed phrases. Each phrase of a Hebrew *shir* is therefore typically followed by a ‘balancing’ phrase that parallels it. Put another way it can be said that the first line of each verse of Hebrew poetry draws a picture in *outline form*; the second line of the verse then comes along to provide corresponding details that *add dimension and color to the outline*.

A poetic way to describe this parallelism is to analogize it to the greeting of two middle eastern friends. In ancient middle eastern culture, when two friends met there was a formal two-step greeting. First came *the embrace* [in Western culture, this has largely been replaced by a handshake]; the embrace was then immediately followed by *a kiss on one or both cheeks*. So it is with the parallel verses of ancient Hebrew poetry; the first stanza equates to the embrace, and the second stanza equates to the kiss.

The text of *Ha'azinu* is written in this classic Hebrew poetry format. In the first column [from right to left, in the manner of Hebrew language and worldview] is the opening, introductory, line of verse; in the second column is the parallel, completing, amplifying, or contrasting line. The words very seldom rhyme; but the images they present most definitely do.

In this parallel structure you can, if you look closely, see the divine thought processes of *evening and morning*, of *seedtime and harvest*, of *Summer and Winter*, of the work of the *plowman and the work of the reaper*, of the *first Temple era and the Second Temple era ... and*, if you have eyes to see and ears to hear, of *the two advents of Messiah*.

A Song With Two-Part Harmony

In this week’s Torah parsha, as one of his final acts of faithfulness to his Divine Calling, Moshe is going to recite the prophetic “Song of Moshe” into the ears of the entire *assembly* [*k'hal* – *i.e.* called out witness throng] standing before him on the plains of Moav. Moshe is not addressing his song only to the mortal humans assembled there, however. He is also singing to *the two witnesses of the covenant renewal* that has just occurred on the plains of Moav – the Heavens [Hebrew

sh'mayim] and the Earth [Hebrew *eretz*].

Ha'azinu ha-sh'mayim v'adaberah

Give your ear, heavens! I will speak!

v'ti sh'ma ha-aretz imrei-fi

And you, Earth! Sh'ma [listen to and heed] the words of my mouth!

[Deuteronomy 32:1]

“***Ha'azinu***” [“*Give ear*”] he says to the *sh'mayim*; “*and I will speak*” He who, at his first meeting with the Holy One on Mount Sinai described himself as “***not a man of words ... for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech***” [Exodus 4:10], now as he prepares to ascend another mountain, Har Nebo, to die finds his tongue loosed and the breath of prophecy pouring forth from his lips like torrents of rain. The heavens *give ear*; but it is the earth – and mortal men formed from the dust of the earth - that *sh'ma*. Hence at his first advent Messiah said “*him who has an ear, let him sh'ma!*” Only those who were ***begotten from above*** [i.e. *b'shamayim*] – and thereby connected with Heaven – *had an ear to give him*. At Messiah's return, however, all the earth – *and all men formed of the earth* – will *sh'ma*. Do you see the *poetic parallelism* at work?

Like Rain in Its Season

Moshe instructs us how the Torah the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven has given through him is to be received. The seedtime manner of receiving Torah is described by Moshe as follows:

Ya'arof k'matar

May my teaching drop like rain,

l'k'chi tizal katal im'rati

May my words flow down like the dew

The harvest-time way of receiving Torah, which will occur in the end of days, however, will be more dramatic:

kis'irim alei-deshe

like a downpour on the meadow,

v'chirvivim alei-esev

like a shower on the grass.

[Deuteronomy 32:2]

We have all experienced the wonderful healing effect of rain upon the dry grass and plant life of Creation. When rain falls on parched land, that which was dry and dormant - and seemingly dead - is suddenly made green and alive again! *Bless the Holy One!* What a Creator!

What rain in season is to Creation, Torah is intended to be to us. Torah is our **life-giving water**, sprinkled by the Holy One from heaven on dry and thirsty men who are like “grass”, and/or like “growing plants”. Torah is nurturing, healing, refreshing, and restorative - the Holy One’s means of awakening and calling forth the potential for abundant life within those who receive it. Note the parallelism again. We can receive Torah like dew in the morning, and it will sustain us – or we can receive it like a downpour on a meadow, and it will cause us to flourish.

May we always be as responsive to His life-giving water as His Creation is to the rain!

Let it Rain!

There are four different Hebrew nouns used in the opening verse of *Ha’azinu* to describe the revelation streams being unleashed in song². First is **matar** [*mem, tet, resh*, translated traditionally as ‘rain’]. Second is **tal** [*tet, lamed*, traditionally translated as ‘dew’]. Third is **sa’ir** [*sin, ayin, yod resh*, traditionally translated ‘raindrops’]. And finally is **rabib’im** [*resh, beit, yod, beit, yod, mem sofit*, traditionally translated as ‘showers’]. Let’s consider these four revelation/inspiration/nurturing/life-giving streams in the order presented.

1. Matar

The Hebrew noun **matar**, commonly translated into English simply as ‘rain’, literally just means anything that falls from the Heavens to the earth. This term is used in Torah to describe rain, but is also used to describe *the fire mixed with sulphur that fell on S’dom and G’morrah* [Genesis 9:24]; *the hail that fell on Egypt* [Exodus 9:18, 23]; and *the manna that fell daily for B’nei Yisrael and the mixed multitude of former slaves who accompanied them throughout the wilderness decades* [Exodus 16:4].

2. Tal

Tal, commonly translated into English as ‘dew’, literally refers to anything that *overshadows, fully covers, blankets* or *inundates*. **Dew** is a humble type of precipitation, requiring no fanfare. No thunder. No lightning. No sound. It appears stealthily, usually under the cover of darkness. Whenever the surface temperature in a locality reaches a certain temperature [called the ‘dew point’], this results in a very quiet, inobtrusive condensation reaction – i.e. water droplets in the air begin to gently release molecules of moisture onto any exposed object or

² This is, of course, not the first time that the inspiration/revelation/nurturing/life-giving process of the Holy One releases on earth has been described by *four water sources* – see Genesis 2:10-14: A river issued forth from Eden, to water the garden; and from there it separated and became four riverheads, *Pishon ... Gichon ... Chidikel ... and Perat*.

surface. The largest deposits of dew tend to form on clear, calm, relatively cool but not cold nights.

3. *Sa'ir*

The 'raindrop' aspect of Moshe's teaching is described by the Hebrew noun *sa'ir*. This is actually a modified form of the noun usually referring to the body hair of a man or goat. The verb root is *sa'ar*, meaning to shudder, shiver, or quiver. The idea seems to be that the words will fall so gently that the sensation they cause will be a 'goose-flesh' like tickling sensation.

4. *Rabib'im*

The 'showers' aspect of Moshe's teaching is described by the Hebrew word *rabib'im*. This word implies a gradually increasing impact – a slow swelling of wisdom that comes with time and exposure.

Now that we know how this song is designed and intended to affect us – let the serenade begin!

Cue the Music: The Opening Lines of Moshe's Final Song

Moshe begins the substantive portion of his song with a declaration of his purpose. ***Ki shem Adonai ekra***, he says [*For I will cry out the Name of the Holy One*]; ***havu godel l'Eloheinu*** [*Greatness will be ascribed unto our God*]. Moshe tells us up front that the substance of his song is going to involve verbalization of *the Name of the Holy One* in the seedtime era in a way that will be revisited in the harvest-time era as ***ascribing greatness to the Holy One***.

Our English Bibles tell us that what Moshe is going to do with the Holy One's *shem* [MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, COMPASSIONATE, FAITHFUL TO COVENANT, FORGIVING] in the seedtime era is to 'publish'³ [some translations say *proclaim*] it. The *seedtime aspect* of this verbalization is going to be by and through and according to Moshe. He says 'I will publish'. The *harvest-time aspect* of this verbalization, on the other hand, is going to be universal. Moshe says that in that era greatness will be ascribed to our Covenant Partner in Heaven.

Let us give some consideration to Moshe's interaction with the Name of the Holy One over his life – and see if that assists us in understanding what he is doing with that Name on the day of his departure from planet earth. Let me take you back in time – back to the time when Moshe was just a fugitive from Pharaoh turned fledgling shepherd on the backside of nowhere. Remember the day the Holy One

apprehended Moshe on Har Sineh in the form of a ‘burning bush’⁴? After silently receiving the stunning call of the Holy One to go back to Egypt and lead the Hebrew slaves to freedom, Moshe responded:

*Behold, when I come to the children of Yisra'el, and tell them,
'The God of your fathers has sent me to you;'
and they ask me, 'What is his 'name'?' What should I tell them?"*
[Exodus 3:13]

Hmmm. It seems Moshe and the Name of the Holy One have a *long history*. Perhaps there is more to the opening line of the substantive part of Moshe’s song than meets the eye. If you will recall, the Holy One responded to Moshe’s first ‘burning bush’ encounter question by saying:

Hayah asher hayah
[Was/Is/Will Be⁵]"
And He said, "Tell the children of Yisra'el this:
"Hayah [i.e. *Was*] ***has sent me to you."***
God [Elohim] said moreover to Moshe,
"Tell the children of Yisra'el this,
"The Holy One⁶, the God of your fathers,
the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Ya'akov,
has sent me to you.' This is my name forever,
and this is my memorial to all generations.

The Holy One is very careful how much of His Name He reveals at this point. He knows Moshe. He knows the *zakenim* [elders] of Israel. He knows the people. *None of them* is ready for truly intimate knowledge of the Holy One at this stage. He will inform them on a ‘need to know’ basis. All they need to know right now is that the Holy One is the Pre-Existing One Who formed Creation – the One known intimately by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov. They – especially Moshe - will learn much, much more of Who He is – but that will come progressively, over many years, according to *the Holy One*’s timetable, not theirs.

The point is this. The Holy One adamantly refused, at the burning bush stage of human history, to be ‘named’ by His creation. Why? Because for a human being to name someone or something is for him (or her) to *define the essence of the person or thing named*. To call a person “Smith”, for instance, means to define that person

⁴ In Hebrew, *b'labat aish m'tavek ha sineh* [in a flame of fire in the midst of the bush].

⁵ The traditional translation “*I am ...*” is an unfortunate [in the author’s opinion] mistranslation/reinterpretation of the text.

⁶ This is the covenant name *yod, hey, vav, hey* [Strong’s Hebrew word #3038]. That name, which our English Bibles translate “**the LORD**”, and some Hebrew-speakers reverently refer to simply as *HaShem* [the Name], was first introduced to us in Genesis 2:4 – as the Creator was about to begin one-on-one interaction with the man He had created. This means merely ‘He Who exists’ or ‘He Who is’.

in terms of his [or his ancestors'] skill in metal work. The Holy One did not want a people who did not know Him – had no relationship with Him - to try to define His essence.

Now fast forward past all that happened in Egypt, past the climactic deliverances wrought at the blood-covered doorposts and at the Sea of Reeds, past the giving of the Torah, and past the sin of the golden calf and its bloody aftermath. Fast-forward all the way to the day Moshe received the second set of tablets from the Holy One's Hand. On that day, we read:

The Holy One [i.e. yod, hey, vav, hey] *descended in the cloud,*
and stood with him there,
and proclaimed [Hebrew, *qara*]
the name of the Holy One [i.e. yod, hey, vav, hey].
The Holy One [i.e. yod, hey, vav, hey] *passed by before him,*
and proclaimed,
***"The Holy One!* [i.e. yod, hey, vav, hey]
***The Holy One!* [i.e. yod, hey, vav, hey],
***a merciful and gracious God,*
***slow to anger,*
***and abundant in lovingkindness and truth,*
***keeping lovingkindness for thousands,*
***forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin;*
***and that will by no means clear the guilty,*
***visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children,*
and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation."
[Exodus 34:5-7]******************

What a difference! What a difference between the Name the Holy One revealed at *the bush* encounter to a fledgling fugitive turned shepherd, and the Name He revealed to the same man after he began to *sh'ma* His Voice, learned to speak with Him face-to-Face, became a 'friend', and cried out earnestly for him to '*teach me Your ways*'.

So now we know a little history about Moshe's interaction with the Name of the Holy One. Let's see if we can understand what Moshe is talking about when he says he is going to 'publish', or 'proclaim' [depending upon the version of Bible you use] that Name with which he is so familiar.

The Lesson from the Hebrew Verb Moshe Employs

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'publish' or 'proclaim' is *qara*. It is usually interpreted to mean *to call*, *to cry*, or *to utter a loud sound*. The first Biblical usage of this verb is found in Genesis 1:5, where we are told that, after speaking forth *ohr* [Light], the Holy One *qara-d yom* [day] and *leilah* [night].

Traditional English translations lead one to believe the Holy One was ‘naming’ the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night’. Hebraically, however, this is only a small part of what was happening. He was issuing a decree of separation, assigning one realm of His Creation to **yom** [the visible realm of time in which earthly life is lived out] and another realm of His Creation to **leilah** [the unseen pre-existing realm we know as eternity]. And in between the two realms, separating them, keeping them from intermixing, was the **qara** – the Divine Cry. So what Moshe – the seasoned friend of the Bridegroom about to bid the visible realm good-bye – does in his farewell ‘song’ is not just ‘publish’ or ‘proclaim’ the Name of the Holy One. He is going to **qara** the Name. He is going to cry out what he heard in the cleft of the rock.

Over a people he knew all too well was imperfect, stiff-necked, and destined to forsake the *mitzvot* and rebel against the *mishpatim* of the Holy One, Moshe proclaimed the Name of the Holy One as he himself had come to know it over a lifetime:

"The Holy One! [i.e., yod, hey, vav, hey]
The Holy One! [i.e., yod, hey, vav, hey],
a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger,
and abundant in lovingkindness and truth,
keeping lovingkindness for thousands,
forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin;
and that will by no means clear the guilty,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children,
and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation.

Oh Beloved, do not miss the significance of this **qara**. Like the **qara** of the Holy One in Genesis 1:5 separated the realms of day and night, the **qara** of the Holy One’s name by Moshe, as the final substantive aspect of Torah, separated *sin* from *judgment*. Because of the Name of the Holy One, though Israel – and indeed everyone – will sin, and deserve to be cast into the realm of eternal **leilah** [darkness] – no one need face Hell. The Name of the Holy One – if called upon – promised mercy, grace, lovingkindness, and forgiveness. Only those who *refused to come to* that Name and call upon it were to bear the full consequences of their sin.

Moshe was about to prophesy of the sin that the people standing before him, and their descendants, would engage in. If Torah was about legalism, condemnation, death for sinners, etc., these people – these Hebrews - would soon simply cease to exist, fading into the mosaic of history, never to be heard from again. But Torah is not about legalism. It is not about condemnation. It is not about death for sinners. What Torah is about is *mercy*, and *grace*, and *forgiveness*. Torah is about the Holy One laying the foundation for a WAY of redemption. It is about the Holy One’s blazing a trail for a pathway to salvation – a pathway open to anyone who will make **t’shuvah** [return] by calling upon that which Moshe has placed between sin

and judgment – i.e. the Name of the Holy One.

As the prophet Yoel declared - and as Yeshua's *talmid* Kefa [Peter] quoted on the day of Pentecost [*Shavuot*]:

Everyone who calls on/cries out [Hebrew, *qara*]
the Name of the Holy One⁷ ***will be saved.***
[Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21]

This brings up a topic related to this High Holiday season. I want to turn your attention to the center-point of the season – the day known as ‘***Yom Kippur***’. There are two central themes inherent in the ancient ***Yom Kippur*** [Day of atonement] liturgy. The first major theme of the service is ***t’shuvah*** [which is highlighted in prayers like *ashamnu*⁸, *al-chet* and *Avinu Malkeinu*⁹]. All are called to make *t’shuvah* for a specific listing of sins of omission and commission, thought, word, and deed. The second major theme of the service is the public ***qara***-ing the Name of the Holy One as it was revealed to Moshe in the cleft of the rock on Mount Sinai. Interestingly enough, according to rabbinic tradition the prayer service on Yom Kippur is the only time in the year that the Name of the Holy One – i.e., *the covenant name made up of the Hebrew letters yod-hey-vav-hey* – absolutely must cross the lips of the people of the Holy One. Making *t’shuvah* is not enough; ***kippur*** [atonement] requires crying out the Name through which the Holy One has promised to recognize for salvation.

In the traditional Yom Kippur service the absolutely essential act of ***qara***-ing upon the Name of the Holy One is done in the context of the recitation of the ***Midot Ha-rachamim*** [the essential Divine attributes of mercy/compassion]. As you may recall, the source of this recitation is the portion of Exodus 34 that follows the words: ***The Holy One descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Holy One*** [i.e. *yod, hey, vav, hey*].

Alas, Beloved, we are all a *stiff-necked people*. We have all *sinned* and *fallen short of His glory*. Thank You, Great Bridegroom of Heaven, that You have in mercy and compassion consented to place Your Name between our sin and the eternal judgment we deserve. Thank You, Holy One of Israel, for your

⁷ In the prophecy in Joel the Name in question is ***b’shem yod-hey-vav-hey***.

⁸ The *Ashamnu* and *al-chet* prayers consist of alphabetical lists of categories of common sins that at least someone in the community can be expected to have committed. Many relate to misuse of speech and wrong thoughts or attitude.

⁹ *Avinu Malkeinu* means “***Our Father, Our King***”. The prayer begins: “*Our Father, Our King, hear our prayer. Our Father, Our King, we have sinned before You. Our Father, Our King, have compassion upon us and our children.*”

lovingkindness. Thank You for placing right in the midst of Your Torah the pathway to forgiveness, and mercy, and grace.

Anticipating the harvest-time, we join Moshe in saying:

*Ascribe¹⁰ greatness to our God.
The Rock, His work is perfect; For all his ways are justice:
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity; Just and right is he.
[Deuteronomy 32:3-4]*

The Folly of Easily Amused and Distracted Children

With this foundation of mercy and grace and forgiveness laid Moshe decides to proceed with his prophetic song. His next stanzas outline for us the sins that the multitudes standing before him – as well as our generation – will inevitably participate in:

*They have dealt corruptly with Him,
[they are] not His children, [it is] their blemish;
[They are] a perverse and crooked generation.
Do you thus requite the Holy One, Foolish people and unwise?
Isn't He your Father who has bought¹¹ you?
He has made¹² you and established¹³ you.*

Moshe does not want us to suffer any illusions of man-made righteousness. He wants us to know, up front, that we will not – indeed, *cannot* - earn the Holy One's

¹⁰ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'ascribe' is **yahab**, *yod, hey, beit*, Strong's Hebrew word #3051, pronounced *yaw-hawb'*. This is a fascinating Hebrew verb. It is first used in Genesis 11:3 and 4, to describe the first words spoken by those who decided to build the tower of babel. The Kings James Version translates it 'go to'. "Go to [Hebrew, **yahab**] let's make brick, and burn them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. And they said, "Go to [Hebrew, **yahab**], let's build us a city, and a tower, whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole eretz." The New American Standard version translates it as 'come'. Neither do the verb justice. The best contemporary English parallel would be 'pitch in!'. It means to contribute money, labor, or support to project or cause.

¹¹ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as "bought" is **qanah**, *kuf, nun, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word # 7069, pronounced *kaw-naw'*. It is first used by Chava [Eve], after she gave birth to Kayin [Cain]. She then proclaimed: "***I have acquired [qanah] a man from the Holy One***".

¹² The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as "made" is **asah**, *ayin, shin, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #6013. This verb paints the picture of a potter fashioning something recognizable and useful from a lump of clay. To **asah** means to apply creative energy toward something, to "build" something useful with raw materials, like a potter works with the clay to make it into the shape on the blueprint from which he is working. If the potter wants to make a water pitcher, he must know what a water pitcher looks like, and must keep working with the clay until it conforms to that shape and image.

¹³ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as 'established' is **kun**, *kaf, vav, nun sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word # 3559, pronounced **koon**. It is the verb root from which the affirmative answer 'ken' [Hebrew form of 'yes'] is derived. The initial use of this verb root in Torah is found in Genesis 41:32, to describe what the Holy One had done by 'doubling' Pharaoh's dream – He 'established' [**kun**] it, marking it as certain to occur, because confirmed by two witnesses.

blessing, love, or salvation. We will sin, and sin grievously. There is none righteous, no not one. It was so in the beginning. It will be so in the end. Look at history. Or as Moshe puts it:

*Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations:
Ask your father, and he will show you;
Your Zakenim, and they will tell you.
When Ha`Elyon gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Yisra'el.*
[Deuteronomy 32:4-8]

Questions For Today's Study

1. What does Moshe call upon to [a] “give ear” to and [b] **sh'ma** [i.e. listen; pay rapt attention to; internalize; then live according to its teaching] to his song?
2. In his introduction Moshe compares the words of his song and the hearer of it to certain things.
[A] List the four things to which Moshe compares the words of his song.
[B] List the two things to which he compares the hearts of his hearers.
3. In verse 4 Moshe describes the Holy One to the Heavens and the earth – and lists 7 attributes or characteristics of the Holy One's personality.

*The deeds of the Mighty One are perfect, for all His ways are just.
He is a faithful God, never unfair; righteous and just is He.*
[Deuteronomy 32:4]

List and define the meaning of each of the seven characteristics or attributes of the Holy One's personality mentioned by Moshe. Example: First of all, Moshe says that the Holy One is “mighty”. In Hebrew, the word is ‘*Ha-Tzur*’ – the Rock. The first usage of the word **tzur** in Torah is in Exodus 17:6, where it refers to the source of supernatural water for the Redeemed Community [i.e. the Rock from which water poured forth for the multitude]. What does this **tzur** to you?

4. In verses 5-7 of his song Moshe speaks of a group of “foolish people¹⁴” the Witnesses [the **sh'mayim** and **eretz**] know well, but does not identify them for us.

*They have dealt corruptly with him,
[they are] not his children, [it is] their blemish;
[They are] a perverse and crooked generation.
Do you thus requite the Holy One, Foolish people and unwise?
Isn't He your father who has bought you?*

¹⁴ Note that this is the phrase Shaul of Tarsus picks up and applies to the confused people of Galatia.

He has made you, and established you.

*Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations:
Ask your father, and he will show you;
Your Zakenim, and they will tell you.*

Who do you think these ‘foolish people’ are?

5. Let us turn our attention now to the last verse of the aliyah, Deuteronomy 32:8. That verse says:

*When Ha-Elyon gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Yisra'el.*
[Deuteronomy 32:8]

[A] What three things did the Holy One do with regard to the ethnic groups of the earth?

[B] At what time [Biblically] did the Holy One do these things?

[C] What does it mean that the Holy One did these things “according to the number of the sons of Israel” [some versions have “sons of God”]?

[D] In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the word translated “Israel” in verse eight. Write the Hebrew word and describe the Hebraic word picture it presents.

6. Regarding today’s haftarah reading:

[A] When did David write the song we are studying in this Haftarah?

[B] In verses 1-3 can you find David’s 7 descriptions of the Holy One [warning- the Hebrew makes the first two a little tricky; combine “Rock” with what the Rock does]?

[C] What were some of the real-life circumstances which could have formed the basis for verses 4-7 of this song?

7. This week’s B’rit Chadasha readings will all be from the book of the Revelation. There, as in the song of Moshe and the song of David, the Holy One is portrayed as working behind the scenes of the pages of human history. The Holy One is shown preparing rewards for those who are faithful to Him and punishments for those who go their own way, despite warning after warning, loving call to repentance after loving call to repentance. In order that this week’s passage not be taken out of context, we will read all of chapters 14 and 15.

Be prepared for some stunning events to unfold. Let us all get ready! The Holy One is behind the events, and is bringing history to a conclusion that will honor Him.

In today’s B’rit Chadasha aliyah:

[A] Who is referred to as “*the Lamb*”?

[B] Where is “*the Lamb*” as this passage begins?

[C] Who is with *the Lamb* as the passage begins [look throughout verses 1-5 for as many descriptions and explanations of who these are as you can find]?

[D] What sounds are heard?

[E] In Hebraic thought, numbers are very symbolic. What do you think the number 144,000 could stand for? [Hint: what is the square root of 144? What is the significance of that number to a Hebrew?]

[F] Verse 4 speaks of people who did not “defile themselves with women”. Do you think this is referring to males who have taken [and fulfilled] a vow of celibacy, or do you think it is referring allegorically to something else? Explain your answer, whatever it is. If you think the verse is referring to something besides celibacy, to what do you think it is referring?

*May you see the Hand of the Holy One at work in the circumstances of your life
and in the events taking place in the world this day.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 33:1-3

*Rejoice in the Holy One, you righteous!
Praise is fitting for the upright.*

*Give thanks to the Holy One with the lyre.
Sing praises to him with the harp of ten strings.*

*Sing to him a new song.
Play skillfully with a shout of joy!*