

The 49 Steps



"Blessed are You, Yahweh, Elohim of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Yahweh, is the greatness (yesod), the power (geverah) and the glory (hod), the victory (netzach) and the majesty (tiferet) ; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom (malkut), O Yahweh, and You are exalted as head over all (keter). (1 Chronicles 29:11, 12)"

"Yahweh is good to all: and his tender mercies (chesed) are over all his works. (Psalm 145:9)"

"And you shall count (סְפִירָה sefirah) for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. (Leviticus 23:15)"

Every day, from **"the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering"** to the night before Shavu'ot, we recite a blessing and state the count of the omer in both weeks and days.

ONE STEP AT A TIME

The counting is remembering each step our spiritual ancestors took leaving behind the Land of Oppression in the Exodus until we came to stand at the base of the mountain and received the Torah on Shavu'ot.

The counting is also remembering each day the תלמידים Talmidim (disciples) waited in Jerusalem awaiting **"the gift [our] Father promised, which [they] heard [Messiah YahShua] speak[ing] about... [waiting to] be immersed with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)... [so that they would] be ... witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** (Acts 1:3-8)"

Each step we take transforms us into a people who at Passover become physically free into a people who at Shavu'ot (Pentecost) become spiritually free.

The day the Children of Israel left Egypt they were rejecting the Egyptian and hence, the world's, interpretation of what life is. But it was not until we embraced the Torah did we have the meaning to life. It is through the Torah that we learned the mechanics of meeting the challenges that life can dish out.

Why did Yahweh wait 50 days after the Children of Israel left Egypt before giving the Torah? Why didn't He simply give it to them in Egypt? Because the Children of Israel were not yet spiritually equipped to receive the Torah.

Why did Yahweh wait 50 days until He sent the Comforter to the Talmidim? Because they needed that time to come together to be spiritually equipped, to be in **“one mind and one accord”** to receive the essence of the Father.

Their presence in the Holy City on the three major festivals was in obedience to the Torah as Yahweh commanded Moses:

“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Yahweh thy Elohim in the place which He shall choose . . . they shall not appear before Yahweh empty-handed. (Deuteronomy 16:16)”

It was the holy zeal of believing Israelite and proselytes to be in the Holy City and to enter Yahweh's "Holy House," and observe the impressive priestly rituals of these Festivals. The Talmidim who were meeting secretly in the upper room from the time of Messiah YahShua's Last Seder (Passover meal) until the day of Shavu'ot, were fortunate to be early in the "House of Yahweh," and to be **"all together in one place."** (Acts 2:1-2)

All the Talmidim were singing the "Psalms of Ascents" each step as they ascended to the Holy Mount: **“I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the House of Yahweh." (Psalm 122:1)”**

All the Talmidim were faithful Israelites and true Gentile converts to the Faith of Yahweh. Even after Shavu'ot - after their spiritual transformation and enlightenment, we read that they **“continu[ed] daily with one accord in the Temple- (Acts 2:46).”** They were waiting in what Rebbe YahShua called, **"My Father's House" (John 2:16).** For He said, **"My House shall be called a House of Prayer for all nations."** (Isa. 56; Mark 11:17 cp Matt. 21:13; Luke 19:46; John 2:16-17)

They were one hundred and twenty Torah observant, Spirit-filled and transformed Israelite men and women. No longer afraid of the religious authorities - no longer meeting secretly in the upper room, but boldly, fearlessly proclaiming publicly in the Temple, and in languages new to themselves, **"the wonderful works of Yahweh."**

As they sat on the benches for the accommodation of the worshippers praying in the colonnades around the Courts the priest waved the two leaven loaves in thanksgiving to Yahweh, suddenly **"a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole House where they were sitting."**

Like the Elders sitting around the Tabernacle in Numbers 11 they began to “il sof,” incomprehensibly speaking as the Ruach gave utterance and they could not stop.

The startled, pilgrims, righteous Jews and Gentile converts, all Israelites saw what had

happened and exclaimed: **"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"** As a result Rabbi Kepha began proclaiming the Full Messianic Message instructing them what to do, three thousand souls became Messianic believers and obeyed the Torah statutes of "Teshuvah" and "T'velah" - repentance and immersion in the Mikveh. (2:41) All because the Talmidim took 49 steps to spiritual awakening & power.

Making every step of life count is expressed in what the Torah says about Abraham: **"Abraham was old, he came with his days, and Yahweh blessed Abraham in all [things] (Genesis 24:1)."**

"He came with his days," teaches us that Abraham used each of his days to grow spiritually.

The major impediment to spiritual growth is the sense of being overwhelmed. There has been countless times where a person comes to Yahweh and suddenly they think they can tackle the "Book of Revelation." Or a person comes into the Messianic movement and suddenly they want to study the "Zohar," or learn Kabbalah, inevitably falling short and get discouraged.

In the story of Jacob one evening he falls asleep and sees the "Stairway to Heaven." What this shows us is that to get to the heights of the Heavens, which is the goal of every Believer, we must take one step at a time. Remember, the longest journey begins with just one step.

In the life of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (19th century Europe) He took upon himself the goal of leading an entire city back to Torah. He set up a weekly class and began by telling them, "If you have to work on Shabbat, at least try to minimize the work you do." By taking this approach Rabbi Salanter was able over a few years to turn the community around to full Torah observance -- one step at a time.

In your stepping out to spiritual growth you may take two steps forward one step back but remember what the Scriptures say, **"... a righteous man (Tzaddik) may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity. (Proverbs 24:16)"** The definition of a Tzaddik is not someone who is perfect, but rather someone who, although he may fail, does not give up. He repents, dusts himself off and gets up walking in the spirit again.

חֶשְׁבֹן Cheshbon -- SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING

Nowhere in the entire Torah is the date of Shavu'ot mentioned. It merely takes place at the end of 50 days -- because the key is to get there one step at a time counting, from the root word חָשַׁב khā·shab' meaning to calculate or simply to count.

The Torah, in describing the Omer, says, **"count for you" (Leviticus 23:15)** -- because each person has to do this for himself. You have to get there at your own pace. You don't want to climb a ladder and get tripped up between the rungs and fall! Even if that ladder is Jacob's ladder.

To reinforce your spiritual goals write them down, keep an accurate tally or accounting of your progress. Choose a convenient time in the prayer cycle, morning, midday, and at night and commit to working on this at least 15 minutes each time every day. At the end of the Omer process, you will have experienced a journey of spiritual-improvement and be ready to receive the Spirit of the Torah. You won't just be counting the Omer, you will be making the Omer count.

MAKING THE OMER COUNT

Pesach represents the love affair between the Commonwealth of Israel and Yahweh, and Shavu'ot symbolizes the marriage of Israel to the Creator (with the mountain being the chupa, the cubes of sapphire with the Ten Commandments the ring and the Torah the כְּתוּבָה Katubah), then, again, it's logical for the wedding to follow the courtship. Having noted this relationship between the two festivals, we now see the importance of the period of counting of the omer. Somehow the mitzvah of the omer is the connector or, better, the transition between them. What we must ask ourselves is, how does the counting of the omer accomplish this job? What is the mechanism for preparing ourselves for the wedding?

Each step of the 49 days has its own unique spiritual awakening. We tap into, or receive, this revelation by getting as close to the Father and let him create in us a counterpart of His graces within ourselves. There are seven lower graces that we must become intimate with. And there are seven ways to look at each grace. Not doing this would be dis-grace-ful. We do not want to be full of dis-grace, rather, we want to be full of His grace. After the Father refines us in all 49 dimensions, we are fully prepared to receive Divine revelation.

The seven lower spiritual graces are:

Chesed: Mercy which acts as Lovingkindness in us

Gevurah: Severeness, which acts as Restraint & awe in us

Tiferet: Beauty which acts as harmony in us

Netzach: Victory, which acts as Perseverance in us

Hod: Glory that acts as humility in us

Yesod: Foundation, which acts as bonding or cleaving in us

Malkut: Kingdom or Sovereignty which acts as nobility in us.

Now. Let us embark on our journey to the Mount.

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WEEK 1 - חֶסֶד CHESD: LOVING-KINDNESS

Day 1 -- Chesed of Chesed: Loving-kindness in Loving-kindness

Yahweh's Mercy acts on our attribute of mercy.

Love is the single most powerful and necessary component in mercy. It is both giving and receiving. Love allows us to reach above and beyond ourselves, to experience another person

and to allow that person to experience us. It is the tool by which we learn to experience Yahweh. Examine the love aspect of your mercy.

“He who does not love does not know Yahweh, for Yahweh is love...And we have known and believed the love that Yahweh has for us. Yahweh is love, and he who abides in love abides in Yahweh, and Yahweh in him. (1 John 4:8,16)”

Ask yourself: What is my capacity to love another person? Do I have problems with giving? Am I stingy or selfish? Is it difficult for me to let someone else into my life? Am I afraid of my vulnerability, of opening up and getting hurt?

Even our Heavenly Father revealed Himself from His אִפְסָגָה “Afisgah” “nothingness” or “no thingness” to reveal Himself as the Divine Creator or Father. It should be understood that this does NOT mean that Yahweh is "nothing" for He is NOT a THING, but is a "somethingness" that we cannot define. But it was when He created angels and man did He expose Himself to vulnerability. He created the chance for being hurt. He was not afraid to become intimate with His creation.

“...a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Torah? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Rebbe YahShua, "And who is my neighbor?" Rebbe YahShua replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Rebbe YahShua said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-37)”

When you encounter others in crisis, especially with people you want to avoid, how do you respond? Rebbe YahShua posed such a scenario to the religious experts of his day. He contrasted the attitudes of three bystanders to the scene of a bloody victim beaten half-dead. Why did the religious leaders refuse help the man that lay lifeless on the ground? Yet, the Samaritan who was despised by the Jews because of their failure to defend Judah against the Babylonians and their assimilation with the pagan Arab population, came to the rescue? Who

showed true compassion and mercy? Rebbe YahShua makes the supposed villain, the despised Samaritan, the merciful one as an example for the Torah observant Jews. Why didn't the priest and Levite stop to help? The priest didn't want to risk the possibility of ritual impurity. His piety got in the way of charity. The Levite approached close to the victim, but stopped short of actually helping him. Perhaps he feared that bandits might be waiting to ambush him. The Levite put personal safety ahead of saving his neighbor. Are you willing and ready to show mercy, even to those you do not want to associate with?

Exercise for the day: Find a new way to express your love to your loved one even when they are unlovely.

"Father, may your love always be the foundation of my life. And may my love for you express itself in an eagerness to show mercy to others."

Day 2 -- Gevurah of Chesed: Discipline in Loving-kindness

Yahweh's Judgment acting on our attribute of mercy

Healthy love must always include an element of discipline and discernment; a degree of distance and respect for another's boundaries; an assessment of another's capacity to contain your love. Love must be tempered and directed properly. Ask a parent who, in the name of love, has spoiled a child **"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:2)."** Or someone who suffocates a spouse with love and doesn't allow them any personal space.

Does your love or giving tend to overwhelm those whom you intend to benefit? Healthy Lovingkindness must be tempered by recognition of the capacity of the recipient. A Master may wish to give over everything he knows to his student, but doing so would only overwhelm and confuse the student. Similarly with a parent: Lovingkindness without discipline can lead to a spoiled child, or one "suffocated" with love.

"There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz'arus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz'arus in his bosom. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz'arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz'arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that

he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)"

Rebbe YahShua paints a dramatic scene of contrasts -- riches and poverty, heaven and hell, compassion and indifference, inclusion and exclusion; judgment when mercy has completely played out. We also see an abrupt and dramatic reversal of fortune. Lazarus was not only poor, but also incapacitated. He was "laid" at the gates of the rich man's house. The dogs, which licked his sores probably also, stole the little bread he procured for himself. Dogs in the ancient world symbolized contempt. Enduring the torment of these dogs only added to the poor man's miseries and sufferings. The rich man treated the beggar unmercifully with contempt and indifference, until he found his fortunes reversed! The name Lazarus means El is my help. Despite a life of misfortune and suffering, Lazarus did not lose hope in Yahweh. His eyes were set on a treasure stored up for him in heaven. The rich man, however, could not see beyond his material treasure. He not only had every thing he needed, he indulged in his wealth to excess. He was too absorbed in what he had to notice the needs of those around him. He lost sight of Yahweh and the treasure of heaven because he was preoccupied with seeking happiness in material things. He served wealth rather than Yahweh. Yahweh gives grace to the poor and humble of heart that seeks treasure in heaven. Do you hunger for Yahweh and for his way of happiness and holiness?

Look for aspects of your behavior - thought, speech, deed - which reflect judgment & restraint refining your sense of mercy.

However, do not let your love or giving overwhelm those whom you intend to benefit.

Exercise for the day: Help someone on their terms not on yours. Apply yourself to their specific needs even if it takes effort.

"Father, increase my hunger for you and for your way of happiness and holiness. Make me rich in the things of heaven and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others the treasure you have given to me."

Day 3 -- Tiferet of Chesed: Compassion, Harmony in Loving-kindness

Yahweh's beauty acting upon your attribute of mercy.

Harmony in love is one that blends both the chesed and gevurah aspects of love. Harmonized love includes empathy and compassion. Love is often given with the expectation of receiving love in return. Compassionate love is given freely; expects nothing in return - even when the other doesn't deserve love. Tiferet is giving also to those who have hurt you.

"Then Rabbi Kepha came up and said to him, "Sovereign, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Rebbe YahShua said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Therefore the kingdom of heaven

may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." Now when Rebbe YahShua had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. (Matthew 18:21-19:1)"

How does mercy and justice go together to form the balance of beauty? The prophet Amos speaks of Yahweh forgiving transgression three times, but warns that Yahweh may not revoke punishment for the fourth (see Amos 1:3-13; 2:1-6).

When Rabbi Kepha posed the question of forgiveness, he characteristically offered an answer he thought Rebbe YahShua would be pleased with. *Why not forgive seven times!* How unthinkable for Rebbe YahShua to counter with the proposition that one must forgive seventy times that. Rebbe YahShua made it clear that there is no reckonable limit to forgiveness. And he drove the lesson home with a parable about two very different kinds of debts. The first man owed an enormous sum of money -- millions in our currency. In Rebbe YahShua's time this amount was greater than the total revenue of a province -- more than it would cost to ransom a king! The man who was forgiven such an incredible debt could not, however bring himself to forgive his neighbor a very small debt, which was about one-hundred-thousandth of his own debt. The contrast could not have been greater! No offense our neighbor can do to us can compare with our debt to Yahweh! We have been forgiven a debt, which is beyond all paying; to ransom our debt of sin Yahweh gave up his only begotten Son. If Yahweh has forgiven each of us our debt, which was very great, we, too must forgive others the debt they owe us. Rebbe YahShua teaches that **"one must forgive in order to be forgiven."** If we do not forgive our fellow man we cannot expect Yahweh to forgive us. Rabbi Yakkov HaTzaddik (James) says that **"judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy (James 2:13)."** Mercy is truly a gift and it is offered in such a way that justice is not negated. Mercy "seasons" justice as "salt" seasons meat and gives it flavor. Mercy follows justice and perfects it. To pardon the unrepentant is not mercy but license. C.S. Lewis, a contemporary Christian author wrote: "Mercy will flower only when it grows in the crannies of the rock of Justice: transplanted to the

marshlands of mere Humanitarianism, it becomes a man-eating weed, all the more dangerous because it is still called by the same name as the mountain variety." If we want mercy shown to us we must be ready to forgive others as Yahweh has forgiven us. Do you hold any grudge or resentment towards anyone?

Exercise for the day: Offer a helping hand to a stranger.

"Father, you have been kind and forgiving towards me. May I be merciful as you are merciful. Free me from all bitterness and resentment that I may truly forgive from the heart all who may have caused me injury or grief."

Day 4 -- Netzach of Chesed: Endurance in Loving-kindness

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of mercy.

Is my love enduring? Does it withstand challenges and setbacks? Do I give and withhold love according to my moods, committing emotional blackmail or is it constant regardless of the ups and downs of life? Is it conditional, dependent upon circumstances? Are you willing to work at your relationships? Do you put vitality and excitement into your giving, or is it half-hearted?

A Master patiently listens once again to the student's complaints about lack of progress or questions of doubt, and then responds with encouragement. Throughout the day, examine your habits of giving and Lovingkindness - are they imbued with liveliness and strength?

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-46)"

In a peasant community the best safe was often the earth. The man in the parable "went in his joy" to sell everything. Why? Because he found a treasure worth possessing above all else he had. He did not, however, have enough to buy the treasure. Fortunately, he only needed enough to buy the field. In a similar fashion, Yahweh offers his kingdom as incomparable treasure at a price we can afford! We can't pay the full price for the life, which Yahweh gives us; but when we exchange our life for the life, which Yahweh offers, we receive a treasure beyond compare. The pearl of great price also tells us a similar lesson. Pearls in the ancient world came to represent the supremely valuable. Rebbe YahShua remarked that one should **"not cast pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6)."** Why would a merchant sell everything for a peerless pearl? No doubt because he was attracted to what he thought was the greatest treasure he could possess. Discovering Yahweh's kingdom is like stumbling across hidden treasure or finding the one pearl of great price. When we discover the Kingdom of Yahweh we receive the greatest possible treasure -- the Father himself. Selling all that we have to obtain this incomparable treasure could mean many things -- our friends, job, our "style of life", what we do with our free time. **"Treasure"** has a special connection to the *heart*, the place of desire and longing, the place of

will and focus. The thing we most set our *heart* on is our highest treasure. In this parable what does the **“treasure of the kingdom”** refer to? It certainly refers to the Kingdom of Yahweh in all its aspects. But in a special way, the Father himself is the treasure we seek for. **“If the Almighty is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight yourself in the Almighty (Job 22:22-23).”** Is Yahweh the treasure and delight of your heart?

Exercise for the day: Reassure a loved one of the constancy of your love.

"Father, reveal to me the true riches of your kingdom through Your Messiah. Help me to set my heart on you alone as the treasure beyond compare with any other. Free my heart of any inordinate desires or attachment to other things that I may freely give to you all that I have in joy and gratitude for all that you have given to me. May I always find joy and delight in your presence."

Day 5 -- Hod of Chesed: Humility in Loving-kindness

Yahweh's glory acting upon our attribute of mercy.

Sometimes we get imprisoned in feeling and are unable to forgive or compromise your position. Hod introduces the aspect of humility in love; the ability to rise above yourself and forgive or give in to the one you love just for the sake of love even if you're convinced that you're right. Arrogant affection is not love.

Giving causes you to be sensitive to the needs of the one you are benefiting? Do you give love in the way you would want it, or the way the recipient wants it? We are sometimes disappointed that our generosity or love is not reciprocated. However, if we honestly look at how we give, we might find that we are giving from our own perspective: what would be satisfying for us, not the individual we are intending to benefit. Hod is sufficiently restraining our own desires for love and giving in order to grasp what the recipient needs or wants.

A Master, when establishing an educational approach, must consider each student's background, including occupation, financial circumstances, habits, and residence or environment.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve Yahweh and mammon. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if Yahweh so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore

do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day. (Matthew 6:24-34 (Luke 12:24-27))"

What does **"serving two masters"** and **"anxiety"** have to do with reaching our potential to be glorified? Yahweh is mindful of who He's benefiting. Double-mindedness and fretting both have the same root problem -- being divided within oneself. The root word for "anxiety" literally means "being of two minds". An anxious person is often "tossed to and fro" and paralyzed by indecision. Fear of some bad outcome usually cripples those afflicted with anxiety. It's also the case with someone who wants to submit to Yahweh but also live according to the world's standards of success and fulfillment. Who is the master in charge of your life? Our "master" is that which governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, and controls the desires of the heart and the values we choose to live by. Many different things can rule us -- the love of money or possessions, the power of position, the glamour of wealth and prestige, the driving force of unruly passions and addictions. Ultimately the choice boils down to two: Yahweh and "mammon". What is mammon? "Mammon" stands for "material wealth or possessions" or whatever tends to "control our appetites and desires". There is one Master alone who has the power to set us free from the slavery of sin and fear and to ultimately glorify us. That Master is the Adam Kadmon (express image of Yahweh), King Messiah YahShua. Rebbe YahShua uses the illustration of nature — the birds and the flowers — to show how Yahweh provides for them in the natural order of his creation. How much more can we, as his children, rely upon Yahweh's providential care? Yahweh is utterly reliable. In the *Messiah's Prayer example* we are reminded that Yahweh is our provider when we pray: **"Give us this day our daily bread."** What is *bread*, but the very staple of life and symbol of all that we need to live and grow. Anxiety is neither helpful nor necessary. It robs us of faith and confidence in Yahweh's help and it saps our energy for doing good. RebbeYahShua admonishes his followers to put away anxiety and preoccupation with material things and instead to seek first the things of Yahweh — his kingdom and righteousness and glory will be our reward. Anxiety robs the heart of trust in the mercy and goodness of Yahweh and in his loving care for us. Yahweh knows our needs even before we ask and he gives generously to those who trust in him. Who is your master -- Yahweh or mammon?

Exercise for the day: Swallow your pride and reconcile with a loved one with whom you have quarreled.

"Father, free me from needless worries and help me to put my trust in you. Make my first concern your kingdom and your righteousness. Help me to live each day with trust and gratitude for your providential care for me".

Day 6 -- Yesod of Chesed: Bonding in Loving-kindness

Yahweh builds a foundation with which to support our attribute of mercy.

Do your acts of Lovingkindness bind you to the one you are intending to benefit, or distance you? Often people give financially in order not to have to give of themselves. Yesod she'be'Chesed is that aspect of Lovingkindness, which builds an attachment between giver and receiver whereby both benefit. The result is a union, which bears fruit.

For love to be eternal it requires cleaving. A sense of togetherness, which actualizes the love in a joint effort. An intimate connection, kinship and attachment, benefiting both parties. This bonding or cleaving bears fruit; the fruit born out of a healthy union.

“And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Yahweh; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of Yahweh. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. (Luke 8:4-15 (Mark 4:3-9; Matthew 13:3-9))”

What do you know about sowing seeds? For a rural community that lived off the land, sowing was absolutely necessary for survival. The mere act of sowing brought great hope in the anticipation of a fruitful harvest. RebbeYahShua's story, however, gives a warning. A seed can't mature into fruit without the proper conditions for growth. Even the prophet Jeremiah gave similar advice several hundred years earlier: **"Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jer. 4:3)**. What's the point of this story for Rebbe YahShua's audience and for us? Rebbe YahShua parable of the sower is aimed at the *hearers of his word*. There are different ways of accepting Yahweh's word and they produce different kinds of fruit accordingly. There is the prejudiced hearer who has a *shut mind*. Such a person is unteachable and blind to the things of Yahweh. Then there is the *shallow* hearer who fails to think things out or think them through; such a person lacks *spiritual depth*. They may initially respond with an emotional fervor, but when it wears off their mind wanders to something else. Another type of hearer is the person who has *many interests or cares*, but who lacks the ability to hear or comprehend what is *truly important*. Such a person is forever *too busy* to pray or *too preoccupied* to study and meditate on Yahweh's word. They may work so hard that they are too tired to even think of anything else but their work. Then there is the one whose *mind is open*. Such a person is at all times willing

to listen and to learn. He or she is never too proud or too busy to learn. They listen in order to *understand*. Yahweh's word has power to change and transform us into the likeness of Messiah. Yahweh gives grace to those who hunger for his word that they may understand his will and have the strength and freedom to live according to it. Do you hunger for Yahweh's transforming Torah?

"Father, faith in your word is the way to wisdom, and to ponder your divine plan is to grow in the truth. May your word take deep root in my heart that I may grow strong in love and live in the hope of your everlasting kingdom."

Exercise for the day: Start building something constructive together with a loved one.

Day 7 -- Malchut of Chesed: Nobility in Loving-kindness

Yahweh teaching us Kingdom principles to act on our attribute of mercy.

Mature love comes with -- and brings -- personal dignity. An intimate feeling of nobility and regality. Knowing your special place and contribution in this world. The problem with society today is that we make sport of victimizing one another. Any love that is debilitating and breaks the human spirit is no love at all. For love to be complete it must have the dimension of personal dignity and divine sovereignty.

Do your acts of Lovingkindness generate a sense of dignity in the recipient, or humiliation and denigration, Father forbid? When you give tzedakah, for example, do you recognize and have in mind that the recipient is doing you the favor, allowing you to fulfill the Mitzvah of tzedakah (righteous charity)?

The true Master recognizes that he stands on the shoulders of his students, able to pluck the choicest fruits from the top of the Divine Tree of Life in large part due to the willingness of the student to receive his teachings. The loving parent gives to the child in a manner which allows the child to experience true self esteem - esteem of the self which is rooted in the nobility of the spirit and in gratitude to the true Giver - Yahweh.

“And again Rebbe YahShua spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good;

so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14 (Luke 14:16-24))"

What can a royal wedding party tell us about Yahweh's kingdom? One of the most beautiful images of the Kingdom in the scriptures is the banquet and wedding celebration given by the King for his son. We, in fact, have been invited to the most important banquet of all! The last book in the Messianic Scriptures ends with an invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb and his Bride, Zion: **"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! (Rev. 22:17)."** Why does Rebbe YahShua's parable seem to focus on an angry king who ends up punishing those who refused his invitation and who mistreated his servants? Rebbe YahShua's parable contains two stories. The first has to do with the original guests invited to the feast. The king had sent out invitations well in advance to his subjects, so they would have plenty of time to prepare for coming to the feast. How insulting for the invited guests to then refuse when the time for celebrating came! They made light of the King's request because they put their own interests above his. They not only insulted the King but the heir to the throne as well. The king's anger is justified because they openly refused to give the king the honor he was due. Rebbe YahShua directed this warning to the people of his day, both to convey how much Yahweh wanted them to share in the joy of his kingdom, but also to give a warning about the consequences of refusing his Son, their Messiah and Savior of the Commonwealth of Israel. The second part of the story focuses on those who had no claim on the king and who would never have considered getting such an invitation. The "good and the bad" along the highways certainly referred to the covenant-keeping Israelites and Gentiles and to the sinners if they will only come into Israel through Messiah YahShua. This is certainly an invitation of Chesed -- undeserved, unmerited favor and kindness! But this invitation also contains a warning for those who refuse it or who approach the wedding feast unworthily. Mercy is a free gift, but it is also an awesome responsibility. Dieterich Bonhoeffer contrasts "cheap grace" and "costly grace". "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves ..the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance ..grace without discipleship, grace without the crucifixion, grace without King Messiah YahShua, living and incarnate...Costly grace is the Full Messianic Message of Restored Israel, which must be sought again and again, the gift, which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow King Messiah YahShua. It is costly because it costs our King his life, and it is grace because it gives mankind the only true life." Yahweh invites each of us to his banquet that we may share in his joy. Are you ready to feast at the King's banquet table?

Exercise for the day: Highlight an aspect of your love that has bolstered your spirit and enriched your life...and celebrate.

"Father, may I always know the joy of living in your presence and grow in the hope of seeing you face to face in your everlasting kingdom."

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WEEK 2 - גְבוּרָה GEVURAH: JUSTICE, DISCIPLINE, RESTRAINT

After the miraculous Exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel spent 49 days preparing for the most awesome experience in human history -- the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Just as the Jewish peoples' redemption from Egypt teaches us how to achieve inner freedom in our lives; so too, this 49-day period, called 'Sefirat Ha-Omer' the Counting of the Omer, is a time of intense character refinement and elevation.

During this time, the aspect of the soul that most requires refinement is the area of the emotions. The spectrum of human experience consists of seven emotional attributes, or sefirot. This week we continue Sefirat Ha'Omer, utilizing the seven dimensions of the seven emotional attributes. The first week after Firstfruits was dedicated to examining the aspect of chesed, loving-kindness. The second week corresponds to the emotional attribute of gevurah, discipline or justice.

If love (Chesed) is the bedrock of human expression, discipline (Gevurah) is the channel through which we express love. It gives our life and love direction and focus. Gevurah -- discipline and measure -- concentrates and directs our efforts, our love in the proper directions.

Day 8 - Chesed of Gevurah: Loving-kindness in Discipline

Yahweh's mercy acting on our attribute of judgment.

When you judge others, is the underlying emotion mercy? The Ba'al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name) teaches that we can know when we are seeing faults in others in order to correct them in ourselves by checking our own emotions. When you feel anything other than "ahava" love for the one you wish to discipline, then you are seeing your own faults in them.

A Master recognizes the capabilities and level of the student. While the Master's impulse may be to give over everything he understands, he recognizes that this may actually do the student harm. So the Master may distance himself from the student, and even appear severe to the student - in truth, it is an act of Lovingkindness. The classic example of parental "Lovingkindness that is in severity" is forbidding the child to touch the fire or play with a knife out of concern for the child's welfare. Throughout the day, examine your habits of self-restraint and judgment - is their intent Lovingkindness, or are they a projection of your own shortcomings?

The underlying intention and motive in discipline is love. Why do we measure our behavior, why do we set boundaries, why do we establish standards and expect people to live up to them -- only because of love. Chesed of gevurah is the love in discipline; it is the recognition that your personal discipline and the discipline you expect of others is only an expression of love. It

is the understanding that we have no right to judge others; we have a right only to love them and that includes wanting them to be their best.

Ask yourself: when I judge and criticize another is it in any way tinged with any of my own contempt and irritation? Is there any hidden satisfaction in his failure? Or is it only out of love for the other?

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:9-13)"

Exercise for the day: Before you criticize someone today, think twice: Is it out of concern and love?

"Father help me to be merciful when I when all I want to be is judgmental. Help me discern the appropriate time to show the correct attribute. It is such a slippery slope."

Day 9 -- Gevurah of Gevurah: Discipline in Discipline

Yahweh's judgment acting on our attribute of justice.

When you judge others, what criteria do you use? Do you consider the possibility that what is appropriate for you may be inappropriate for the individual you are judging. Do you project your circumstantial values on the other person?

A Master who may sleep only three hours a night, strongly reprimands the student for getting less than a full seven hours rest. The Master draws life-force from spiritual sources, a level the student aspires to, but has not yet attained. A parent reprimands the child for associating with other children exhibiting inappropriate behavior, and yet works daily with their parents.

Examine the discipline factor of discipline: Is my discipline reasonably restrained or is it excessive? Do I have enough discipline in my life and in my interactions? Am I organized? Is my time used efficiently? Why do I have problems with discipline and what can I do to enhance it? Do I take time each day for personal accounting of my schedule and accomplishments?

"One of the multitude said to him, "Rabbi, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" And He said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have

nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But Yahweh said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward Yahweh." (Luke 12:13-21)"

Exercise for the day: Make a detailed plan for spending your day and at the end of the day see if you've lived up to it.

“Father, let us not judge our relationship with you cheap. Allow us to cultivate the position of “Ahav” in covenant with you. And let us judge other the way we would like to be judged. Let us judge in a way it attracts people to You.”

Day 10 -- Tiferet of Gevurah: Compassion in Discipline

Yahweh's beauty acting on our attribute of justice.

When you are find it necessary to discipline others, are you balanced in your approach? Do you combine elements of both lovingkindness and severity? Is the result a sense of harmony, of the other person having the security of knowing what is appropriate and what inappropriate, while understanding that your intent is to benefit them?

A Master guides the student through the rigors of personal growth and transformation. The process is arduous for both - and the Master must always maintain a balance between "drawing close with the right hand and pushing away with the left." The Master must have the respect of the student, and yet the student must always be clear that the Master's sole intent is the student's growth.

Underlying and driving discipline must not only be love, but also compassion. Compassion is unconditional love. It is love just for the sake of love, not considering the others position. Tiferet is a result of total selflessness in the eyes of Yahweh. You love for no reason; you love because you are a reflection of Yahweh. Does my discipline have this element of compassion?

“And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise

and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'" (Luke 15:11-32)"

The parable of the father and his two sons is the longest one in the Messianic Scriptures. What is the main point of the story? Is it the contrast between an obedient and a disobedient son or is it between the reception given to a spendthrift son by the father and the reception given by the eldest son? Rebbe YahShua contrasts the father's merciful love with the eldest son's somewhat harsh reaction to his errant brother and to the lavish party his joyful father throws for his repentant son. While the errant son had wasted his father's money, his father, nonetheless, maintained unbroken love for his son. The son, while he was away, learned a lot about himself. And he realized that his father had given him love which he had not returned. He had yet to learn about the depth of his father's love for him. His deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed on the husks of pigs and his reflection on all he had lost, led to his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father. While he hoped for reconciliation with his father, he could not have imagined a full restoration of relationship. The father did not need to speak words of forgiveness to his son; his actions spoke more loudly and clearly! The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet symbolize the new life -- pure, worthy, and joyful -- of anyone who returns to Yahweh. The prodigal could not return to the garden of innocence, but he was welcomed and reinstated as a son. The errant son's dramatic change from grief and guilt to forgiveness and restoration express in picture-language the resurrection from the dead, a rebirth to new life from spiritual death. The parable also contrasts mercy and its opposite -- unforgiveness. The father who had been wronged, was forgiving. But the eldest son, who had not been wronged, was unforgiving. His unforgiveness turns into contempt and pride. And his resentment leads to his isolation and estrangement from the community of forgiven sinners. In this parable Rebbe YahShua gives a vivid picture of Yahweh and what Yahweh is like. Yahweh is truly kinder than us. He does not lose hope or give up when we stray. He

rejoices in finding the lost and in leading them home. Do you know the joy of repentance and restoration of sonship with your heavenly Father?

Exercise for the day: Be compassionate to someone you have reproached.

"Father, may I never doubt your love nor take for granted the mercy you have shown to me. Fill me with your transforming love that I may be merciful as you are merciful."

Day 11 -- Netzach of Gevurah: Endurance in Discipline

Yahweh's Victory acting on our attribute of justice.

Many today want to equate spiritual growth by material substance. This reminds me of a parable; "A poor man, desperate to find the means to support his family, sets sail to foreign shores. Tragically, his ship is sunk in the stormy sea, but he somehow makes it to a tropical island. Much to his amazement, when he steps ashore he sees that the island is literally covered with diamonds. There are diamonds on the beach, on the diamonds in the brush, diamonds everywhere.

Determined to return home, he finds a shipbuilder on the island and offers to pay him in diamonds to build a boat. The shipbuilder laughs and then says, "But what am I going to do with worthless diamonds?!"

The confused stranger soon learns that the currency of value on the island is meat gristle. Working very hard over a number of years, he earns enough meat gristle not only to pay for the building of a boat, but also to have plenty to bring back with him. When his boat is finished, the confused stranger loads it up with meat gristle and heads home.

When he arrives home, his family is overjoyed to see him. Proudly, he announces, "We are now rich!" He opens the hatch of the boat and shows them... meat gristle! A ghastly silence hangs in the air. The poor man realizes his tragic mistake, and begins to cry.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-46)"

The Righteous Man disciplines himself concerning materialism judging what is trivial and what is treasure. He resists his appetite for the luxurious spending himself for that which really matters. He is jealous concerning what is precious and only shares it with the truly deserving. Rebbe YahShua remarked that one should **"not cast pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6)."** Why would a merchant sell everything for a pearl? Because he was attracted to what he thought was the greatest priceless treasure that could possess. Discovering Yahweh's kingdom is like stumbling across hidden treasure or finding the one pearl of great price.

Effective discipline must be enduring and tenacious. Is my discipline consistent or only when forced? Do I follow through with discipline? Am I perceived as strong in my faith? Do I follow through in my calling.

Exercise for the day: Extend the plan you made on day two for a longer period of time listing short-term and long-term goals. Review and update it each day, and see how consistent you are and if you follow through.

“Father help me walk in Your will. Help me to set goals according to Your plan for my life. **For those blessed by [You] shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by [You] shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh, and [You] delight in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for Yahweh upholds him with His hand. (Psalm 37:22-24)”** Reveal to me the true riches of your kingdom. Help me to set my heart on you alone as the treasure beyond compare with any other. Free my heart of any inordinate desires or attachment to other things that I may freely give to you all that I have in joy and gratitude for all that you have given to me. May I always find joy and delight in your presence.”

Day 12 -- Hod of Gevurah: Humility in Discipline

Yahweh's glory acting upon our attribute of justice.

The results of discipline and might without humility are obvious. The greatest catastrophes have occurred as a result of people sitting in arrogant judgment of others. Am I arrogant in the name of justice (what I consider just)? Do I ever think that I sit on a higher pedestal and bestow judgment on my subjects below? What about my children and others I influence and interact with?

"...the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is

how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:23-35)"

We should always temper our judgment knowing that we will be judged by the way we judge others.

"Father, help me put myself in another's situation. Let me discern with your heart. I understand that I too seek mercy. I will temper my justice with humility and mercy."

Exercise for the day: Before judging anyone, insure that you are doing so selflessly with no personal bias

Day 13 -- Yesod of Gevurah: Bonding in Discipline

Yahweh's establishing a foundation upon our attribute of justice.

For discipline to be effective it must be coupled with commitment motivated by love. In disciplining yourself there has to be a sense that the discipline is important for developing a Covenant cleaving to the Father. The discipline of Torah produces a righteous character.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the Heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour." Rabbi Kepha said, "Sovereign, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the King said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more. (Luke 12:32-48)"

Our Heavenly Father offers us a relationship with him as his sons and daughters and the promise of eternal life as well. The image Rebbe YahShua uses here is a great wedding feast in which the master honors his guests by seating them in the place of honor and personally waiting on them Himself. This parable also contains a lesson in faithfulness and a warning against laziness. Why is faithfulness so important to Yahweh? It is the foundation for any lasting and meaningful relationship. Faithfulness or fidelity allows us to persevere in living an unswerving commitment.

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate to your child or student how discipline is an expression of intensifying your bond and commitment to each other.

"Father, you are faithful even when I fail. Help me to remain ever faithful to you and to not shrink back when I encounter difficulties. Make me diligent in the exercise of my responsibilities and wise and prudent in the use of my gifts, time and resources."

Day 14 -- Malchut of Gevurah: Nobility of Discipline

Yahweh's nobility acting upon our attribute of justice.

Discipline, like love, must enhance personal dignity. Discipline that breaks a person's dignity will backfire. Healthy discipline should bolster self-esteem and help elicit the best in a person; cultivating his nobility. Does my discipline cripple the human spirit; does it weaken or strengthen me and others?

"As they heard these things, [Messiah] proceeded to tell a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of Yahweh was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Trade with these till I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. The first came before him, saying, 'Sovereign, your pound has made ten pounds more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Sovereign, your pound has made five pounds.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Sovereign, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.' (And they said to him, 'Sovereign, he has ten pounds!') 'I tell you, that to every one who has will more be

given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.'" And when he had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. (Luke 19:11-28)"

The parable speaks first of the King's trust in his subjects. While He goes away He leaves them with his money to use as they think best. While there were no strings attached, this was obviously a test to see if the King's subjects would be faithful and reliable in their use of the money entrusted to them. The king rewards those who are faithful and He punishes those who sit by idly and who do nothing with his money.

Exercise for the day: When disciplining someone, foster their self-respect.

"Father, your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Come and be the ruler of my heart and thoughts and be the king of my home and family. Help me to make good use of the gifts, talents, time, and resources you give me for your glory and your kingdom."

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WEEK 3 - תְּפִאֶרֶת TIFERET - HARMONY, COMPASSION

During the third week of Counting the Omer, we examine the emotional attribute of Tiferet or compassion. Tiferet blends and harmonizes the free outpouring love of Chesed with the discipline of Gevurah. Tiferet possesses this power by introducing a third dimension -- the dimension of truth, which is neither love nor discipline and therefore can integrate the two.

Torah is truth accessed through selflessness: rising above your own self and your predispositions, enabling you to realize truth. Truth gives you a clear and objective picture of yours and others' needs. This quality gives Tiferet its name, which means beauty: it blends the differing colors of love and discipline, and this harmony makes it beautiful.

"He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, "Sovereign, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of Yahweh and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the Kingdom of Yahweh. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." (Luke 13:22-30)"

It was customary for Rabbis in Rebbe YahShua's time to close the door on tardy students and not allow them back for a whole week in order to teach them a lesson in discipline and

faithfulness. Rebbe YahShua told this story in response to the question of who will make it to the Olam Habab, World to Come. Rebbe YahShua warns that we can be excluded if we **“do not strive to enter by the narrow door.”** The door is Messiah. **“I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved (John 10:9).”**

As we **“strive side by side for the faith of the Full Messianic Message (Phil. 1:27)”** King Messiah YahShua assures us of complete victory! We do not struggle alone, Yahweh is with us and his grace is sufficient! Do you trust in Yahweh's grace and help, especially in times of testing and temptation?

Day 15 -- Chesed of Tiferet: Loving-kindness in Compassion

Yahweh's mercy acts on our attribute of beauty.

Examine the love aspect of compassion. Ask yourself: Is my compassion tender and loving or does it come across as pity? Is my sympathy condescending and patronizing? Even if my intention is otherwise, do others perceive it as such? Does my compassion overflow with love and warmth; is it expressed with enthusiasm, or is it static and lifeless?

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Matthew 18:12-14)"

Exercise for the day: When helping someone extend yourself in the fullest way; offer a smile or a loving gesture.

“Father, help me be happy when a backslider or half-timer comes in.”

Day 16 -- Gevurah of Tiferet: Discipline in Compassion

Yahweh's judgment acting on our attribute of beauty.

For compassion to be effective and healthy it needs to be disciplined and focused. It requires discretion both to whom you express compassion, and in the measure of the compassion itself. It is recognizing when compassion should be expressed and when it should be withheld or limited. Discipline in compassion is knowing that being truly compassionate sometimes requires withholding compassion. Because compassion is not an expression of the bestower's needs but a response to the recipient's needs.

“...a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Torah? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and "your neighbor as

yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Rebbe YahShua, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Rebbe YahShua answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Rebbe YahShua said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-37)"

Exercise for the day: Express your compassion in a focused and constructive manner by addressing someone's specific needs.

"Father, may your love always be the foundation of my life. And may my love for You express itself in an eagerness to do good for others."

Day 17 -- Tiferet of Tiferet: Compassion in Compassion

Yahweh's beauty, compassion, harmony acting upon our attribute of beauty.

True compassion is limitless. It is not an extension of your needs and defined by your limited perspective. Compassion for another is achieved by having a selfless attitude, rising above yourself and placing yourself in the other person's situation and experience. Am I prepared and able to do that? If not, why? Do I express and actualize the compassion and empathy in my heart? What blocks me from expressing it? Is my compassion compassionate or self-serving? Is it compassion that comes out of guilt rather than genuine empathy? How does that affect and distort my compassion? Test yourself by seeing if you express compassion even when you don't feel guilty.

"[Messiah] said, "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's

hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'" (Luke 15:11-32)"

The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet symbolize the new life -- pure, worthy, and joyful -- of anyone who returns to Yahweh in Teshuvah. The prodigal could not return to the garden of innocence, but he was welcomed and reinstated as a son. The prodigal son's dramatic change from grief and guilt to forgiveness and restoration express in picture-language the Nephesh HaShamayim, a rebirth to new life from spiritual death. The parable also contrasts the father who had been wronged, was forgiving, the eldest son, who had not been wronged, was unforgiving.

Exercise for the day: Express your compassion in a new way that goes beyond your previous limitations: express it towards someone to whom you have been callous.

"Father, may I never doubt your love nor take for granted the mercy you have shown to me. Fill me with your transforming love that I may be merciful as you are merciful."

Day 18 -- Netzach of Tiferet: Endurance in Compassion

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of beauty.

Is my compassion enduring and consistent? Is it reliable or flighty? Does it prevail among other forces in my life? Do I have the capacity to be compassionate even when I'm busy with other activities or only when it's comfortable for me? Am I ready to stand up and fight for another?

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, 12 saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last." (Matthew 20:1-16)"

Some work only for reward. Others labor out of love and joy for the opportunity to work. Messiah calls his Talmidim to serve Yahweh and mankind with generosity and joy. Do you find joy in giving freely to others?

" Father, may I serve you and my neighbor with a glad and generous heart, not looking for how much I can get but rather looking for how much I can give."

Exercise for the day: In the middle of your busy day take a moment and call someone who needs a compassionate word. Defend someone who is in need of sympathy even if it's not a popular position.

Day 19 -- Hod of Tiferet: Humility in Compassion

Yahweh's glory acting upon our attribute of beauty.

If compassion is not to be condescending, it must include humility. Hod is recognizing that my ability to be compassionate and giving does not make me better than the recipient; it is the acknowledgment and appreciation that by creating one who needs compassion Yahweh gave me the gift of being able to bestow compassion. Thus there is no place for haughtiness in compassion.

Do I feel superior because I am compassionate? Do I look down at those that need my compassion? Am I humble and thankful to Yahweh for giving me the ability to have compassion for others?

"Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" (Luke 17:7-10)"

We love to claim our rights! But who can satisfy the claims of love? We can never outdo Yahweh. Does the love of Yahweh compel you to give your best?

Exercise for the day: Express compassion in an anonymous fashion, not taking any personal credit.

"Father, fill my heart with love, gratitude and generosity. Make me a faithful and zealous servant for you. May I generously pour out my life in loving service for you and for others, just as you have so generously poured yourself out for me."

Day 20 -- Yesod of Tiferet: Bonding in Compassion

Yahweh's establishing a foundation upon our attribute of beauty.

For compassion to be fully realized, it needs bonding. It requires creating a channel between giver and receiver; a mutuality that extends beyond the moment of need. A bond that continues to live on. That is the most gratifying result of true compassion. Do you bond with the one you have compassion for, or do you remain apart? Does your interaction achieve anything beyond a single act of sympathy?

"After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he left everything, and rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Rebbe YahShua answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:27-32 (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17))"

Some people are so preoccupied with their own practice of religion that they neglected to help the very people who needed the greatest care. Their religion was selfish because they didn't want to have anything to do with people not like themselves. Rebbe YahShua stated, **"I came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners."** Ironically those kind of people are as needy as

those they despised. **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)** show them mercy and kindness?

Exercise for the day: Ensure that something eternal is built as a result of your compassion. “Father, let us now come to you: Our hearts are cold, warm them with your selfless love. Our hearts are sinful; cleanse them with your precious Son’s blood. Our hearts are weak; strengthen them with your joyous Spirit. Our hearts are empty; fill them with your divine presence, so that we will have compassion on others.”

Day 21 -- Malchut of Tiferet: Nobility in Compassion

Yahweh’s nobility acting upon our attribute of beauty.

Examine the dignity of your compassion. For compassion to be complete it must recognize and appreciate individual dignity. It should boost self-esteem and cultivate human dignity. Both your own dignity and the dignity of the one benefiting from your compassion.

Is my compassion expressed in a dignified manner? Does it elicit dignity in others? Do I recognize the fact that when I experience compassion as dignified it will reflect reciprocally in the one who receives compassion?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:24-26)”

Exercise for the day: Rather than just giving charity, help the needy help themselves in a fashion that strengthens their dignity.

"Father, let me be wheat sown in the earth, to be harvested for you. I want to follow wherever you lead me. Give me fresh hope and joy in serving you all the days of my life."

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WEEK 4 - נֶצַח NETZACH - ENDURANCE

During the fourth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of endurance known as Netzach. Netzach means endurance, fortitude and ambition and is a combination of determination and tenacity. It is a balance of patience, persistence and stamina. Endurance is also being reliable and accountable, which establishes security and commitment.

Without endurance, any good endeavor or intention has no chance of success. Endurance means to be alive, to be driven by what counts. It is the readiness to fight for what you believe, to go all the way. This, of course, requires that endurance be closely examined to ensure that it is used in a healthy and productive manner.

Day 22 -- Chesed of Netzach: Loving-kindness in Endurance

Yahweh's mercy acts on our attribute of endurance.

For anything to endure it needs to be loved. A neutral or indifferent attitude will reflect in a marginal commitment. If you have difficulty making commitments, examine how much you love and enjoy the object that requires your commitment. Do I love my work? My family? My choices? For endurance to be effective it needs to be caring and loving. Does my endurance cause me to be, or seem to be, inflexible? Does my drive and determination cause me to be controlling? Am I too demanding? Do others cooperate with me out of the sheer force of my will and drive, or out of love?

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." Rebbe YahShua used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Rebbe YahShua said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:1-18)"

Exercise for the day: When fighting for something you believe in, pause a moment to ensure that it is accomplished in a loving manner.

"Father, help me hear the voice of my Good Shepherd. I want to walk worthy of the calling with which you called me, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with love for one another."

Day 23 -- Gevurah of Netzach: Discipline in Endurance

Yahweh's judgment acting on our attribute of endurance.

Examine the discipline of your endurance. Endurance must be directed toward productive goals and expressed in a constructive manner. Is my endurance and determination focused to help cultivate good habits and break bad ones? Or is it the other way around? Does my endurance come from strength or weakness? Does it come out of deep conviction or out of defensiveness? Do I use my endurance against itself by being tenacious in my lack of determination?

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16 (Mark 9:50, Luke 14:34 f.))"

There is great freedom and joy for those who live in Yahweh's light and who seek this truth. Those who listen to Yahweh and heed his voice will receive more from him.

Exercise for the day: Break one bad habit today.

" Father, you guide me by the light of your saving truth. Fill my heart and mind with your light and truth and free me from the blindness of sin and deception that I may see your ways clearly and understand your will for my life. May I radiate your light and truth to others in word and deed".

Day 24 -- Tiferet of Netzach: Compassion in Endurance

Yahweh's beauty, compassion, harmony acting upon our attribute of endurance.

Healthy endurance, directed to develop good qualities and modifying bad ones, will always be compassionate. The compassion of endurance reflects a most beautiful quality of endurance: an enduring commitment to help another grow. Endurance without compassion is misguided and selfish. Endurance needs to be not just loving to those who deserve love, but also compassionate to the less fortunate. Does my determination compromise my compassion for others? Am I able to rise above my self and empathize with my competitors? Am I gracious in victory?

"One Sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him. Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than

you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:1, 7-14)"

True generosity springs from a heart full of mercy and compassion. We cannot outperform Yahweh in his mercy towards us. Do you show grace as Messiah YahShua shows grace towards us?

Exercise for the day: Be patient and listen to someone who usually makes you impatient.

"Father, fill me with gratitude for your boundless love and mercy towards me. And purify my love for others that I may seek their good rather than my own benefit or gain. Free me to love others as you love."

Day 25- Netzach of Netzach: Endurance in Endurance

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of endurance.

Everyone has willpower and determination. We have the capacity to endure much more than we can imagine, and to prevail under the most trying of circumstances.

Ask yourself: Is my behavior erratic? Am I inconsistent and unreliable? Since I have will and determination, why am I so mercurial? Am I afraid of accessing my endurance and committing? Do I fear being trapped by my commitment? If yes, why? Is it a reaction to some past trauma? Instead of cultivating endurance in healthy areas, have I developed a capacity for endurance of unhealthy experiences? Do I endure more pain than pleasure? Do I underestimate my capacity to endure?

"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.' For Rav Yochannan HaTivelah (John the Immerser) has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." (Luke 7: 31-35)"

Exercise for the day: Commit yourself to developing a new good habit.

"Father, open my ears to hear the Full Messianic Message of Your Kingdom and set my heart free to love and serve you joyfully. May nothing keep me from following You wholeheartedly."

Day 26 -- Hod of Netzach: Humility in Endurance

Yahweh's glory acting upon our attribute of endurance.

Yielding -- which is a result of humility -- is an essential element of enduring. Standing fast can sometimes be a formula for destruction. The oak, lacking the ability to bend in the hurricane, is uprooted. The reed, which yields to the wind, survives without a problem. Do I know when to yield, out of strength not fear? Why am I often afraid to yield?

Endurance is fueled by inner strength. Hod of Netzach is the humble recognition and acknowledgement that the capacity to endure and prevail comes from the soul that Yahweh gave each person. This humility does not compromise the drive of endurance; on the contrary, it intensifies it, because human endurance can go only so far and endure only so much, whereas endurance that comes from the Divine soul is limitless.

Do I attribute my success solely to my own strength and determination? Am I convinced that I am all-powerful due to my level of endurance? Where do I get the strength at times when everything seems so bleak?

"Now I know that Yahweh saves His anointed; He will answer him from His Holy Heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Yahweh our Elohim. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright. (Psalm 20:6-8)"

Exercise for the day: When you awake, acknowledge Yahweh for giving you a soul with the extraordinary power and versatility to endure despite trying challenges. This will allow you to draw energy and strength for the entire day.

"Father, give me the strength to live for You victoriously everyday!"

Day 27 -- Yesod of Netzach: Bonding in Endurance

Yahweh's establishing a foundation upon our attribute of endurance.

Bonding is an essential quality of endurance. It expresses your unwavering commitment to the person or experience you are bonding with, a commitment so powerful that you will endure all to preserve it. Endurance without bonding will not endure.

"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know

how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Ruach HaKodesh to those who ask him! (Luke 11:11-13 (Matthew 7:9-11))"

Exercise for the day: To ensure the endurance of your new resolution, bond with it immediately. This can be assured by promptly actualizing your resolution in some constructive deed or committing yourself to another.

"Heavenly Father, your grace knows no bounds, for you are merciful, gracious and kind. May I never doubt your love nor hesitate to seek you with confidence in order to obtain the gifts, graces, and daily provision I need to live as your disciple and child."

Day 28 -- Machos of Netzach: Nobility in Endurance

Yahweh's nobility acting upon our attribute of endurance.

Sovereignty is the cornerstone of endurance. Endurance that encompasses the previous six qualities is indeed a tribute and testimony to the majesty of the human spirit. Is my endurance dignified? Does it bring out the best in me? When faced with hardships do I behave like a king or queen, walking proudly with my head up, confident in my Yah-given strengths, or do I cower and shrivel up in fear?

"...what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my Talmidim. (Luke 14:31-33)"

Exercise for the day: Fight for a dignified cause.

"Father, may your love consume me and transform my life that I may truly desire nothing more than life with you. Help me to count the cost and to joyfully embrace the cross for your sake."

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WEEK 5 - הֵד הוֹד - HUMILITY

During the fifth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of Hod or humility. Humility -- and the resulting yielding -- should not be confused with weakness and lack of self-esteem. Hod or humility is modesty -- it is acknowledgment (from the root of the Hebrew word "hoodoo"). It is saying "thank you" to Yahweh. It is clearly recognizing your qualities and strengths and acknowledging that they are not your own; they were given to you by Yahweh for a higher purpose than just satisfying your own needs. Humility is modesty; it is recognizing how small you are which allows you to realize how large you can become. And that makes humility so formidable.

A full cup cannot be filled. When you're filled with yourself and your needs, "I and nothing else", there is no room for more. When you "empty" yourself before something greater than yourself, your capacity to receive increases beyond your previously perceived limits. Humility

is the key to transcendence; to reach beyond yourself. Only true humility gives you the power of total objectivity. Humility is sensitivity; it is healthy shame out of recognition that you can be better than you are and that you can expect more of yourself. Although humility is silent it is not a void. It is a dynamic expression of life that includes all seven qualities of love, discipline, compassion, endurance, humility, bonding and sovereignty.

Day 29 -- Chesed of Hod: Loving-kindness in Humility

Yahweh's mercy acts on our attribute of humility.

Examine the love in your humility. Healthy humility is not demoralizing; it brings love and joy not fear. Humility that lacks love has to be reexamined for its authenticity. Sometimes humility can be confused with low self-esteem, which would cause it to be unloving. Humility brings love because it gives you the ability to rise above yourself and love another. Does my humility cause me to be more loving and giving? More expansive? Or does it inhibit and constrain me?

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:1-13)"

Exercise for the day: Before praying with humility and acknowledgment of Yahweh, give some charity. It will enhance your prayers.

“Father, I humbly await Your Kingdom Come with passionate love for the Bridegroom.”

Day 30 -- Gevurah of Hod: Discipline in Humility

Yahweh's judgment acting on our attribute of humility.

Humility must be disciplined and focused. When should my humility cause me to compromise and when not? In the name of humility do I sometimes remain silent and neutral in the face of wickedness? Humility must also include respect and awe for the person or experience before whom you stand humble. If my humility is wanting, is it because I don't respect another?

“[Messiah] said to them, 'Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. (Luke 11:5-8)”

Exercise for the day: Focus in on your reluctance to commit in a given area to see if it originates from a healthy, humble place.

"Heaven Father, you are merciful, gracious and kind. May I never doubt your love nor hesitate to seek you with confidence in order to obtain the gifts, graces, and daily provision I need to live as your disciple and child."

Day 31 -- Tiferet of Hod: Compassion in Humility

Yahweh's beauty, compassion, harmony acting upon our attribute of humility.

Examine if your humility is compassionate. Does my humility cause me to be self-contained and anti-social or does it express itself in empathy for others. Is my humility balanced and beautiful? Or is it awkward? Just as humility brings compassion, compassion can lead one to humility. If you lack humility, try acting compassionately, which can help bring you to humility.

“...the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Sovereign, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' (Matthew 25:34-40)”

Exercise for the day: Express a humble feeling in an act of compassion.

“Father, expand my capacity to love and help others.”

Day 32 -- Netzach of Hod: Endurance in Humility

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of humility.

Examine the strength and endurance of your humility. Does my humility withstand challenges? Am I firm in my positions or do I waffle in the name of humility? Humility and modesty should not cause one to feel weak and insecure. Netzach of Hod underscores the fact that true humility does not make you into a "doormat" for others to step on; on the contrary, humility gives you enduring strength. Is my humility perceived as weakness? Does that cause others to take advantage of me?

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. (Matthew 5:38-40)"

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," was reserved for capital punishment not for the interaction between people. **"Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:21)"**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)"

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the strength of your humility by initiating or actively participating in a good cause.

"Father, cause me to bless and do not curse (Romans 12:14)."

Day 33 "Lag B'Omer"-- Hod of Hod: Humility in Humility

Yahweh's glory acting upon our attribute of humility.

"Lag B'Omer" marks the yahrtzeit (death) of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. The Talmud (Shabbat 33b) describes a seminal event in the life of Rabbi Shimon:

When the Romans outlawed the study of Torah, Rabbi Shimon spoke out against them. The Romans thus pronounced a death sentence against Rabbi Shimon, who was forced to go into hiding.

Rabbi Shimon and his son Elazar fled to a cave in the northern region of Israel. They had no means of subsistence, but a miracle occurred and a carob tree sprouted in the cave, along with a stream of water.

Rabbi Shimon and his son had no change of clothes. In order to preserve their clothes from wearing out, they each dug a deep hole, removed their clothes and covered themselves in the sand. They would spend the entire day immersed in Torah study. When the time for prayer arrived, they would put on their clothes, pray -- and then return to the sand.

Rabbi Shimon and his son remained in the cave for 12 years, involved in nothing but the study of Torah.

At the end of the 12 years they received word that the Caesar had died, and the decree against Rabbi Shimon was lifted.

Rabbi Shimon went on to become the greatest Torah teacher of his generation. When he reached the final day of his life, he called together his students and told them to pay close attention.

The Zohar (3:291b) describes the scene: "Rabbi Shimon spent the entire day in a prophetic stream of consciousness, revealing the deepest mystical secrets of Torah. He told his students: "Until now, I have held the secrets close to my heart. But now, before I die, I wish to reveal all."

Rabbi Abba, a student assigned with the job of transcribing Rabbi Shimon's words, reports: "I couldn't even lift my head due to the intense light emanating from Rabbi Shimon. The entire day the house was filled with fire, and nobody could get close due to the wall of fire and light.

At the end of the day, the fire finally subsided, and I was able to look at the face of Rabbi Shimon: He was dead, wrapped in his Tallis, lying on his right side -- and smiling."

Why was Rabbi Shimon bathed in light and fire? Because Torah is compared to fire -- "Aish HaTorah". Fire is that material which converts physical matter into energy. So too, Torah shows us how to transform the material world into the spiritual. In fact Rabbi Shimon's teachings, "The Zohar," literally means "shining light."

Everyone has humility and modesty in their hearts, the question is the measure and manner in which one consciously feels it. Am I afraid to be too humble? Do I mask and protect my modesty with aggressive behavior? Humility must also be examined for its genuineness. Is my humility humble? Or is it yet another expression of arrogance? Do I take too much pride in my humility? Do I flaunt it? Is it self-serving? Is my humility part of a crusade or is it genuine?

"Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. " (Matthew 11:29)

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came to serve." (Matthew 10:27.)

Exercise for the day: Be humble just for its own sake.

"Where the Spirit of Yahweh is there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17)"

"Spirit of the living Elohim, fall fresh on me; Spirit of the living Elohim, fall fresh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me, and fill me. Spirit of the living Elohim, fall fresh on me."

Day 34 -- Yesod of Hod: Bonding in Humility

Yahweh's establishing a foundation upon our attribute of humility.

Humility should not be a lonely experience. It ought to result in deep bonding and commitment. There is no stronger bond than one that comes out of humility. Does my humility separate me from others or bring us closer? Does my humility produce results? Long term results? Does it create an everlasting foundation upon which I and others can rely and build.

"Hear, O Yahweh, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, Yahweh, I will seek." Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O Elohim of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then Yahweh will take care of me. (Psalm 27:7-10)"

Exercise for the day: Use your humility to build something lasting.

"Father, humble me and create a New Creature out of me."

Day 35 -- Malchut of Hod: Nobility in Humility

Yahweh's nobility acting upon our attribute of humility.

Walking humbly is walking tall. Dignity is the essence of humility and modesty. The splendor of humility is majestic and aristocratic. Humility that suppresses the human spirit and denies individual sovereignty is not humility at all. Does my humility make me feel dignified? Do I feel alive and vibrant?

"...if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5:15-17)"

Exercise for the day: Teach someone how humility and modesty enhance human dignity.

“Father, help me see that the “the end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. (Ecclesiastes 7:8)”

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WEEK 6 - תב' YESOD - BONDING

During the sixth week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the emotional attribute of Yesod or Cleaving. Bonding means connecting; not only feeling for another, but being attached to him. Not just a token commitment, but total devotion. It creates a channel between giver and receiver. Bonding is eternal. It develops an everlasting union that lives on forever through the perpetual fruit it bears.

Bonding is the foundation of life. The emotional spine of the human psyche. Every person needs bonding to flourish and grow. The bonding between mother and child; between husband and wife; between brothers and sisters; between close friends. Bonding is affirmation; it gives one the sense of belonging; that "I matter", "I am significant and important". It establishes trust -- trust in yourself and trust in others. It instills confidence. Without bonding and nurturing we cannot realize and be ourselves.

Day 36 -- Chesed of Yesod: Loving-kindness of Bonding

Yahweh's mercy acts on our attribute of cleaving.

Love is the heart of Cleaving. You cannot bond without love. Love establishes a reliable base on which bonding can build. If you have a problem bonding, examine how much you love the one (or the experience) with which you wish to bond. Do I try to bond without first fostering a loving attitude? Is my bonding expressed in a loving manner?

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. (John 15:9-17)"

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the bond you have with your child or friend through an act of love.

“Father, I have set my love on You. Show me Your Salvation. Because I call upon Your name save me!”

Day 37 -- Gevurah of Yesod: Discipline of Bonding

Yahweh's judgment acting on our attribute of cleaving.

Bonding must be done with discretion and careful consideration with whom and with what you bond. Even the healthiest and closest bonding needs "time out", a respect for each individual's space. Am I codependent? Am I too dependent on the one I bond with? Is he too dependent on me? Do I bond out of desperation? Do I bond with healthy, wholesome people?

“[Messiah] came to a city of Samaria which is called Scar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Rebbe YahShua therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Yahshua said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Rebbe YahShua answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of Yahweh, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Rebbe YahShua answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Rebbe YahShua said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Rebbe YahShua said to her, "You have well said, "I have no husband," for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Rebbe YahShua said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. Yahweh is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming". "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Rebbe YahShua said to her, "I who speak to you am He." And at this point His Talmidim came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the

men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. (John 4:5-30)"

Exercise for the day: Review the discipline in your bonding experiences to see if it needs adjustment.

“Father, help me not need other but rather to want them.”

Day 38 -- Tiferet of Yesod: Compassion in Bonding

Yahweh's beauty, compassion, harmony acting upon our attribute of cleaving.

Bonding needs to be not only loving but also compassionate, feeling your friend's pain and empathizing with him. Is my bonding conditional? Do I withdraw when I am uncomfortable with my friend's troubles?

“...Hillel, he said to him "Do not to others what you would not have them do to you: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it." (b.Shab. 31a)

“Whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even to them, for this is the Torah and the (N’Viim) Prophets. (Matthew 7:12 & Luke 6:31)”

Exercise for the day: Offer help and support in dealing with an ordeal of someone with whom you have bonded.

Father, cause us to treat others the way we want to be treated...in love.”

Day 39 -- Netzach of Yesod: Endurance in Bonding

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of cleaving.

An essential component of bonding is its endurance; its ability to withstand challenges and setbacks. Without endurance there is no chance to develop true bonding. Am I totally committed to the one with whom I bond? How much will I endure and how ready am I to fight to maintain this bond? Is the person I bond with aware of my devotion?

“Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of Yahweh is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto

her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy Elohim my Elohim: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Yahweh do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. (Ruth 1:11-19)”

Exercise for the day: Demonstrate the endurance level of your bonding by confronting a challenge that obstructs the bond.

“Father, cause me to own my position in the Kingdom. No matter what my heritage in the world my heritage in You is Israel which is Your heritage.”

Day 40 -- Hod of Yesod: Humility of Bonding

Yahweh’s glory acting upon our attribute of cleaving.

Humility is crucial in healthy bonding. Arrogance divides people. Preoccupation with your own desires and needs separates you from others. Humility allows you to appreciate another person and bond with him. Healthy bonding is the union of two distinct people, with independent personalities, who join for a higher purpose than satisfying their own needs. True humility comes from recognizing and acknowledging Yahweh in your life. Am I aware of Yahweh in bonding? And He gives me the capacity to unite with another, despite our distinctions.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the King. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Messiah is head of the Movement; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the Movement is subject to Messiah, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the Movement and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Assembly, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the King does the Assembly. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Messiah and the Assembly. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)”

Exercise for the day: When praying acknowledge Yahweh specifically for helping you bond with others.

“Father, help me love the one You gave me.”

Day 41 -- Yesod of Yesod: Bonding in Bonding

Yahweh's establishing a foundation upon our attribute of cleaving.

Every person needs and has the capacity to bond with other people, with significant undertakings and with meaningful experiences. Do I have difficulty bonding? Is the difficulty in all areas or only in certain ones? Do I bond easily with my job, but have trouble bonding with people? Or vice versa?

Examine the reasons for not bonding. Is it because I am too critical and find fault in everything as an excuse for not bonding? Am I too locked in my own ways? Is my not bonding a result of discomfort with vulnerability? Have I been hurt in my past bonding experiences? Has my trust been abused? Is my fear of bonding a result of my history?

To cultivate your capacity to bond, even if you have valid reasons to distrust, you must remember that Yahweh gave you a spirit that is nurturing and loving and you must learn to recognize the voice within, which will allow you to experience other people's spirit. Then you can slowly drop your defenses when you recognize someone or something you can truly trust.

One additional point: Bonding breeds bonding. When you bond in one area of your life, it helps you bond in other areas.

”... there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Rebbe YahShua who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Rebbe YahShua came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the King; Behold, Sovereign, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Rebbe YahShua said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:2-10)”

Exercise for the day: Begin bonding with a new person or experience you love by committing designated time each day or week to spend together constructively.

“Father, cause me to seek out the lost and share the message of the Kingdom with them.”

Day 42 -- Malchut of Yesod: Nobility in Bonding

Yahweh's nobility acting upon our attribute of cleaving.

Bonding must enhance a person's dignity. It should nurture and strengthen your own dignity and the dignity of the one you bond with. Does my bonding inhibit the expression of my personality and qualities? Does it overwhelm the one I bond with?

“Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi (of where the King sees me); for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac materialized in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she fell off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What kind of man is this that is appearing before us? And the servant said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Genesis 24:62-67)”

Exercise for the day: Emphasize and highlight the strengths of the one with whom you bond.
“Father, give me the ability to contain the love you send my way.”

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WEEK 7 - מַלְכוּת MALCHUT - SOVEREIGNTY, LEADERSHIP

During the seventh and final week of counting the Omer, we examine and refine the attribute of Malchut -- nobility, sovereignty and leadership. Sovereignty is a state of being rather than an activity. Nobility is a passive expression of human dignity that has nothing of its own except that which it receives from the other six emotions. True leadership is the art of selflessness; it is only a reflection of a Higher will. On the other hand, Malchut manifests and actualizes the character and majesty of the human spirit. It is the very fiber of what makes us human.

Malchut is a sense of belonging. Knowing that you matter and that you make a difference. That you have the ability to be a proficient leader in your own right. It gives you independence and confidence. A feeling of certainty and authority. When a mother lovingly cradles her child in her arms and the child's eyes meet the mother's affectionate eyes, the child receives the message: "I am wanted and needed in this world. I have a comfortable place where I will always be loved. I have nothing to fear. I feel like royalty in my heart." This is Malchut, kingship.

Day 43 -- Chesed of Malchut: Loving-kindness in Nobility

Yahweh's mercy acts on our attribute of nobility.

Healthy sovereignty is always kind and loving. An effective leader needs to be warm and considerate. Does my dignity make me more loving? Do I exercise my authority and leadership in a caring manner? Do I impose my authority on others? Do I lead by serving?

“Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall not want... maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of

righteousness for his names sake..... Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil;my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the House of Yahweh for ever. (Psalms 23:1-6)”

Exercise for the day: Do something kind for your subordinates.

“Father, cause me to lead the way You lead me. Let me show Your attributes not my base nature.”

Day 44 -- Gevurah of Malchut: Discipline in Nobility

Yahweh’s judgment acting on our attribute of nobility.

Although sovereignty is loving, it needs to be balanced with discipline. Effective leadership is built on authority and discipline. There is another factor in the discipline of sovereignty: determining the area in which you have jurisdiction and authority.

Do I recognize when I am not an authority? Do I exercise authority in unwarranted situations? Am I aware of my limitations as well as my strengths? Do I respect the authority of others?

“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. The rich and poor meet together: Yahweh is the maker of them all. A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. By humility and the fear of Yahweh are riches, and honour, and life. (Proverbs 22:1-4)”

Exercise for the day: Before taking an authoritative position on any given issue, pause and reflect if you have the right and the ability to exercise authority in this situation.

“Father, help me bring no reproach against my reputation as a emissary of Your Kingdom.”

Day 45 -- Tiferet of Malchut: Compassion in Nobility

Yahweh’s beauty, compassion, harmony acting upon our attribute of nobility.

A good leader is a compassionate one. Is my compassion compromised because of my authority? Do I realize that an integral part of dignity is compassion? Tiferet -- harmony -- is critical for successful leadership. Do I manage a smooth-running operation? Am I organized? Do I give clear instructions to my subordinates? Do I have difficulty delegating power? Do we have frequent staff meetings to coordinate our goals and efforts?

"Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. (Psalms 119:24)"

"For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in the multitude of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 24:6)"

Exercise for the day: Review an area where you wield authority and see if you can polish it up and increase its effectiveness by curtailing excesses and consolidating forces.

"Father, help us listen to others so that we can appropriately lead."

Day 46 -- Netzach of Malchut: Endurance in Nobility

Yahweh's victory or endurance acting on our sense of nobility.

A person's dignity and a leader's success are tested by his endurance level. Will and determination reflect the power and majesty of the human spirit. How determined am I in reaching my goals? How strong is my conviction to fight for a dignified cause? How confident am I in myself? Is my lack of endurance a result of my low self-esteem? Do I mask my insecurities by finding other excuses for my low endurance level?

"Sha'ul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Sha'ul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of T'zeveot, the Elohim of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will Yahweh deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a Elohim in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that Yahweh saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Yahweh's, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of

the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. (1 Samuel 17:38-52)”

Exercise for the day: Act on something that you believe in but have until now been tentative about. Take the leap and just do it!

“Father, give us the courage to live our beliefs before all to see.”

Day 47 -- Hod of Malchut: Humility in Nobility

Yahweh’s glory acting upon our attribute of nobility.

Dignity is Yahweh's gift to each individual. Hod of Malchut is the humble appreciation of this exceptional gift. Does my dignity and independence humble me? Am I an arrogant leader? Do I appreciate the special qualities I was blessed with?

"What is man that You (Yahweh) are mindful of him, and the Son of Man that You should visit Him? (Heb 2:6; Ps 8:4) "

Exercise for the day: Acknowledge Yahweh for creating you with personal dignity.

“Father, I stand in awe of you.”

Day 48 -- Yesod of Malchut: Bonding in Nobility

Yahweh’s establishing a foundation upon our attribute of nobility.

Examine the bonding aspect of your sovereignty. Healthy independence should not prevent you from bonding with another person. On the contrary: self-confidence allows you to respect and trust another's sovereignty and ultimately bond with him. That bond will strengthen your own dignity, rather than sacrifice it.

Does my dignity prevent me from bonding? Could that be because of deeper insecurities of which I am unaware? Do I recognize the fact that a fear of bonding reflects a lack of self-confidence in my own sovereignty?

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well (Psalm 139:14)."

Exercise for the day: Actualize your sovereignty by intensifying your bond with a close one.

“Father, thank you for making me who I am.”

Day 49 -- Malchut of Malchut: Nobility in Nobility

Yahweh's Sovereignty acting upon our attribute of nobility.

Examine the sovereignty of your sovereignty. Does it come from deep-rooted inner confidence in myself? Or is it just a put-on to mask my insecurities? Does that cause my sovereignty to be excessive? Am I aware of my uniqueness as a person? Of my personal contribution?

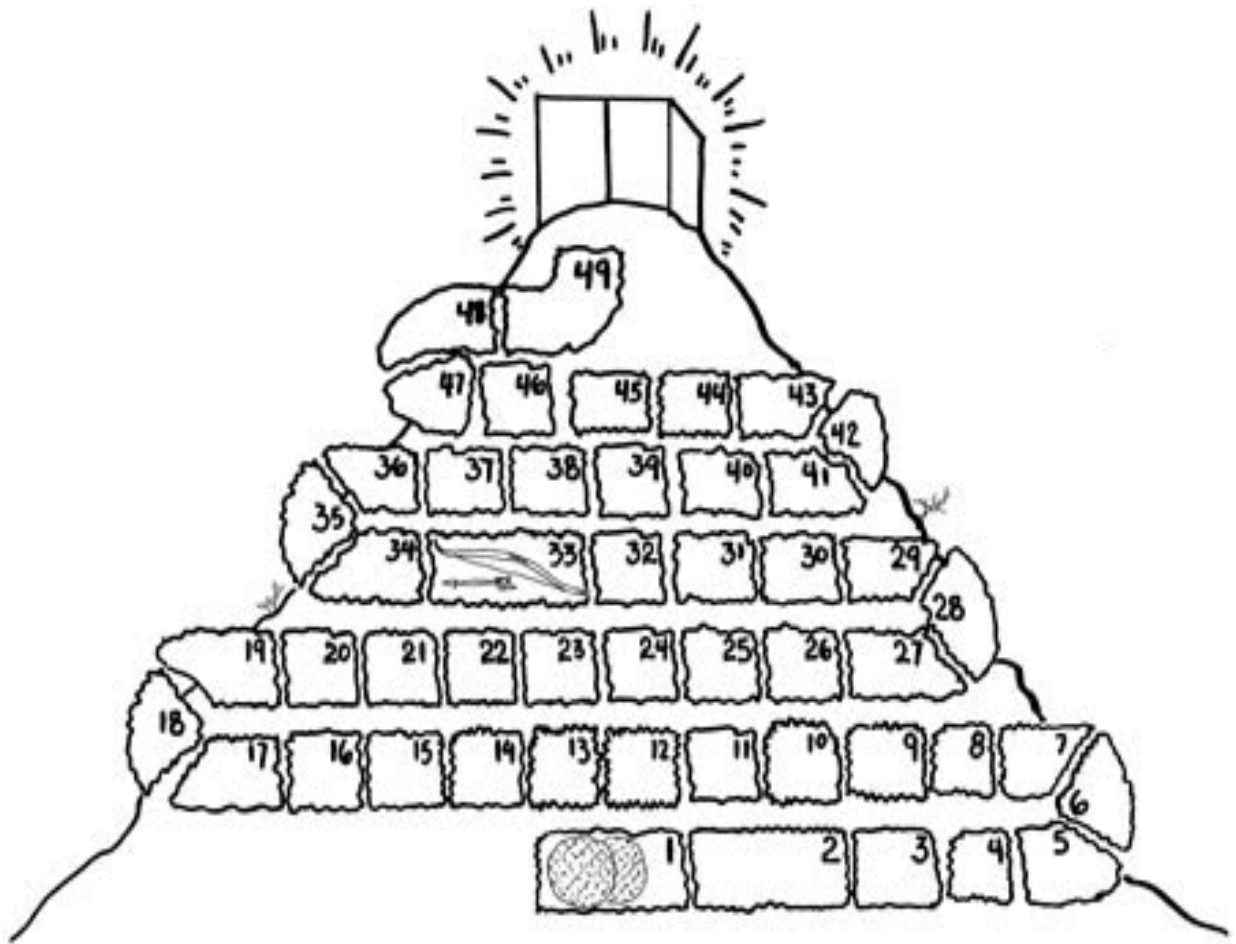
"For Messiah is the goal of the Torah for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the Torah, "The man who does those things shall live by them. (Leviticus 18:5)" Moreover, the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven? (Deuteronomy 30:12)"" (that is, to bring Messiah down from above) or, ""Who will descend into the abyss? (Deuteronomy 30:13)"" (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (Deuteronomy 30:14)" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth King YahShua and believe in your heart that Yahweh has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. (Isaiah 28:16)" For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same King over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of Yahweh shall be saved. (Joel 2:32)" (Romans 10:4-13)"

Exercise for the day: Take a moment and concentrate on yourself, on your true inner self, not on your performance and how you project to others; and be at peace with yourself knowing that Yahweh created a very special person which is you.

"Father, thank you for loving me so much that you gave me Your only begotten son that by my believing in Him and claiming Him as my King I will not perish but live forever."

After the 49 days of Counting the Omer, after having fully achieved inner renewal by merit of having assessed and developed each of our 49 attributes, we arrive at the fiftieth day. On this day we celebrate the Festival of Shavu'ot, the giving of the Torah (Matan Torah). After we have accomplished all we can through our own initiative, then we are worthy to receive a gift (matan) from Above which we could not have achieved with our own limited faculties. We receive the ability to reach and touch the Divine; not only to be cultivated human beings who have refined all of our personal characteristics, but divine human beings who are capable of expressing ourselves above and beyond the definitions and limitations of our beings.

All it took was seven short weeks for the Commonwealth of Israel to rise from the pits of pollution to the heights of closeness to the Creator. But the key to their success was that their gaze was Heavenward. As Oscar Wilde put it "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."



Baruch Atah Yahweh Elo-hai-nu Melech Ha-olam, Asher Kid'shanu B'Mitzvotav V'tzi-vanu Al Sefirat Ha-Omer.

Blessed are You, Yahweh our Elohim, King of the Universe, Who has made us holy with His Commandments, and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

"Today is ____ day(s) of the Omer."

If you forget to count at night, you can count throughout the next day. The following evening you can count again with the blessing. Each time you count a day of the Omer, color in the space on the chart above for that day until we get to the top of the Mountain.

