

*Shiur L'Yom Chamishi*¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Mishpatim:** **Exodus 23:1-33**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 34:18-20**
 B'rit Chadasha: **II Corinthians 6:11-14**

You are not to be a follower of the majority

[Exodus 23:2]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:25-32;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *L'hodot* [The Prayer of Thanksgiving]

Lo tisa shema shav – You will not take up/give credibility to an accusatory or misleading narrative ... *al-tashet yadcha im-rash* - to join your hand with a rasha Exodus 23:1a.

Our ears have heard – and our hearts have been gloriously inspired by - Creator-Speak. We cannot forget the sound of our Bridegroom-King's Voice. We cannot un-hear the marvelous words He spoke over us. Nor would we want to. Creator-Speak - to which we were introduced at Sinai through the *Aseret Ha-Dibrot* – is now TRUE TONE for us and for our progeny. The words of the Holy One our God are pure and wise, healing and redemptive, energizing, inspiring, and empowering. The words of our fellow human beings? Well ... NOT SO MUCH! Oh, the *ra*, *shachat*, *chamas* infected garbage fallen human beings throw at us. Oh the folly. Oh the vanity. Oh the narcissism. Oh the mind-games. Oh the manipulation, confusion, and control.

Always Consider the Source; Always Test for 'Agenda-Influence'

What do we hear from human voices? Complaint. Cynicism. Sarcasm. Scorn. Profanity. Coarse talk. Fault-finding. Backbiting and back-stabbing. Name-calling and label-casting. Gossip. Criticism. Judgmentalism. Vain imaginations. Insane delusions. Sensationalized Reports. Biased Testimonies. Unfounded conclusions. Ranting. Offense. Outrage. Fact-twisting. Doubletalk. Truth-stretching. Newspeak. False prophecy. Hype. Misinformation. Soapboxing. Braggadocio. Bandwagon-recruiting. Grandstanding. Inflammatory rhetoric. Over-thinking. History-rewriting. Cultural, ethnic, and/or generational chest-pounding. Hatemongering. Race-baiting. Gender-jealousy promoting. Class envy-inciting. Mind Control. Narrative-reshaping. Oversimplification. 'Gotcha' journalism. Gaslighting. Slander. Libel. Vengeance-instigating. Virtue-signaling. Pretexts. Propaganda. Prejudice. Mindlessly repeated cliches, bullet points, and slogans. Projection. Cover-ups. Emotional manipulations. And that

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is just the beginning. All these are so far off of Heaven's true tone that the slightest hint of any of them those of us who have been touched by Creator-Speak should set off all kinds of alarms inside us. The Betrothed Bride-people of the Redeemed Community should be so awash in the Bridegroom-King's Kedusha [*i.e.* Heavenly-sourced holiness energy] that all forms of man's DISTORTION should bounce off of us like water off of a duck's back. We should be immersed so deeply in the revelation flow of Heavenly wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and the humble reverent fear of the Holy One that our ears cannot be tickled, and our emotions cannot be triggered, by falsehood. We should be – but alas, most of us are not. Most of us spend far more time listening to all the wrong people saying all the wrong things that we do *sh'ma*-ing the Voice and meditating on the Torah of our Bridegroom-King. That is why lies, false narratives, and deceptions prevail. Don't blame the pathological liars, the religious charlatans, the corrupt politicians, the brainwashed educators, or the sold-out scientists; blame us, for not being trustworthy receptacles and communicators of truth.

***Let No One Deceive You with Empty Words ...
Do Not Be Partakers With Them***

In each generation, it seems, there are times when the entire species of man seems to have fallen through Lewis Carroll's famous '*looking glass*'. Angry voices rule the day. Deception runs rampant. Folly floods the educational institutions, insane delusions the religious ones. Uncleanliness is celebrated. Ancient cultural landmarks are mocked. Government-promulgated and/or Elitist-spread lies are accepted as 'new truth', for a 'new generation'. Rumors, fed by arrogance vain imaginations, spread like wildfire. Biases blind. Paranoias paralyze. The love of many grows cold. Violent outbursts are encouraged and rewarded – as long as they are directed toward the currently 'disfavored' segment of the population. Crime runs rampant. Abominations are worshipped. Lust is redefined as love; lies as truth; virtue as perversion, and vengeance as 'justice'. Toxic speech and behavior is glamorized, rebelliousness is glorified, and profane chants, rants, and calls for violence are vigorously applauded. People swallow camels and strain at gnats. They lust after the vile. They idolize the vain. They get offended at the drop of a hat, outraged at a whispered suggestion. They rail at each other over ideological and political differences of position. They dehumanize people of different ethnicities, philosophies, religious beliefs and/or political positions. They sulk over minor inconveniences. They weaponize science. They politicize medicine. They go nuclear over theology. They infuse information with propaganda, and turn education into indoctrination. They justify acts of violence over differences of opinion. They shout obscenities. They chant slogans. They throw stones. They

lob insults. Doomsday predictions proliferate. Blame, shame, and condemnation become the order of the day. Trash talk replaces discourse. Scandalous allegations, aspersions, accusations, fly back and forth like ping pong balls. Irreverence and profanity masquerade as humor. Sarcasm and cynicism masquerade as analysis.

We are not to follow these trends. We have a higher call. We are called to *carry and emit Divine light*; and what communion does Divine light have with the perverse ways of humans who choose to wallow in spiritual darkness? We are commissioned to be salt; if salt loses its savor, wherewith shall the world be salted? We must never cave in. We must never cease being light and salt – no matter what happens around us. We must never seriously indulge – much less echo – the paranoia and propaganda that the ‘bad news’ side puts out. We must never put our inclination toward mercy, kindness, forgiveness, based on the unshakeable hope of redemption, on hold for anyone, any story, any theory, any crusade, or any agenda. The *simchah of the Holy One* – not the scandal of the day – is our strength. The Holy One’s blessings of fruitfulness, multiplication, and *shalom* – not fleshly outrage over the latest episode of political, cultural, racial, or interpersonal drama – is what makes us valuable to the world.

Hello Darkness, My Old ... Friend?

As the print and broadcast media figured out a long time ago, ‘*Exaggeration Excites*’, ‘*Bad News Sells*’ and ‘*Perversion Plays.*’ Fallen mankind has a long-running infatuation – indeed, a long-standing illicit love affair - with *serpentine pseudo-intelligence*. Human beings of all ages, genders, races, nationalities, cultures, ethnicities, social statuses, and economic classes just keep going back to, and staring up lustfully at, the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. As a result, the world in which we live is absolutely overrun with *speech and emotion fueled by the fruit of that tree*. Narcissists who want to promote themselves know they can attract a following easily – just by *making up juicy rumors about and levying outrageous accusations against* others. They know the poison fruit ingested by Adam and Chava makes our species susceptible to manipulation by negative thoughts and speech. It seems that man’s fallen flesh, if left unchecked, will always gravitate toward negativity. We are suckers for scandal. We delight in drama. We gush over gossip. We salivate for sarcasm. We slurp up cynicism. We crave conspiracy theories. We are addicted to accusation. We lust after lies. We fawn over fear mongers. We hyperventilate over hate. We drool over division sowers. We thus just keep falling head-over-heels for any two-bit ‘negativity whisperer’, ‘conspiracy decrier’, ‘rebel-rouser’, ‘social justice’ crusader, or violence inciter who picks up a megaphone or microphone and points it in our direction. As an automobile with a deformed

wheel will, if not held in check, always veer off center and head toward the sidewalk, so it is with human beings. Watch out, bystanders and pedestrians – this vehicle is out of control!

But *what if* What if there was a *way out*? What if we could *break free*? What if we could overcome the addiction to negativity? What if we could quit circling around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil like birds of prey building up an appetite for carrion? What if we could break off our illicit affair with pseudo-intelligence? What if we could change - and become people of the *tree of life* ecosystem instead of people of the tree of the knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ ecosystem? What if our Creator called to be a *good news people* – in the midst of a *bad news world*?

It Is Time For Us To Break Free of Speech and Emotion Fueled By the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’

The Holy One is inviting a special, representative group of men, women, and children to explore the brilliant, forward-looking thought processes, and the redemption-driven, problem-solving focus, of His Beautiful Mind. He is gently teaching us - through the mediation of our chosen representative, Moshe - how we can start looking at the people and situations in life through the same long-term, Kingdom first lens He uses. Since He wants us to function as His Co-Regents upon the earth, He is patiently teaching us how to strategize and maneuver our way through the maze and emotional trauma of real-time events of human history the way He strategizes and maneuvers through them. He is teaching us how to stop complaining, accusing, ranting, and wreaking havoc in the midst of the situations of crisis and dysfunction we encounter, and to instead speak and sow into such situations in ways that bring Kingdom-advancing solutions and resolutions to bear.

The Holy One has made it very clear that we are to *sh'ma* His Voice, and *sh'mar* His instructions for living – indeed we are to *live by* and through every word that proceeds from the mouth of our Bridegroom. Part of this process involves learning to recognize and deal appropriately with a vast array of ‘other voices’. Not every voice is trustworthy; none but He can utter the words of life. Much of what we are going to hear from the mouths of men in the fallen realm in which we are called to live out our earthly lives is going to be useless – if not dangerous. In fact, most of what we will hear men say is going to be ‘*disinformation*’. The Holy One wants us to prepare us therefore for the reality that with regard to the words we hear spoken by our fellow men we are going to have to ‘parse’ carefully every syllable and closely scrutinize every phrase to determine its trustworthiness. *Wisdom as revealed by the Holy One* should be

what matters to us - not misinformation from the “*rumor mills*” or demagoguery from the “*spin-doctors*” of society. Divine wisdom is to be what guides us in our personal and business relationships - and what governs all our personal and business decision-making.

If we are seeking and focusing upon the Holy One - and not trusting in the pipelines of human disinformation - the Holy One will reveal to us *everything we need to know to fulfill our Divine Purposes and Destiny*. But He will do this in appropriate ways, through His well-established channels of communication. The Holy One has His *sources* and His *counselors*.

Approved – and Unapproved – Sources of Revelation

What are the Holy One’s methods and channels for communicating truth to us? They are, first and foremost, His Torah, His Prophets, and His Apostles, as same were inspired by His *Ruach HaQodesh*. These are *eternal* and *unchanging*. They are *absolutely trustworthy*. They do not cater to our *curiosity*. They do not minister to our fleshly desire to know “*dirty little details*”. They do not pander to our senses of self-importance or self-righteousness.

Secondly, the Holy One has programmed each one of us with *organs of spiritual perception*. He has created us with eyes to *re’eh* [see], ears to *sh’ma*, and a heart to understand His Words and His Ways and discern His movements. He is constantly sending spiritual messages our way – consistent with His Torah – to aid us in applying Torah to our lives and making *tikkun olam* [reconciling the world to Him] in His timing, according to His Plan.

Thirdly, the Holy One has appointed in each community, in each generation, *shof’tim* [judges, well-studied in Torah, who have learned to think like the Holy One by judging according to the Sinaitic *mishpatim*] and *tzaddikim* [righteous ones well practiced in applying Torah in their own lives and households] as His spokesmen on issues of importance to the Community. Do not however under any circumstance confuse this latter category of trustworthy sources of truth [*shof’tim* and *tzaddikim*] with the elected or appointed spokesmen of either religious groups or movements or political organizations or the representatives of governments of men. Do not assume these men have *titles* you would recognize². It takes some searching – and a lot of discernment - to find a true *shofet* or *tzaddik*. They are often *voices crying in the wilderness*. They will seldom hold any “position” recognizable by men. They will seldom be in favor with any religious organization. And yet

² Keep constantly in mind both Yeshua’s forceful teaching in Matthew 23 and Ezekiel’s prophetic warning of Ezekiel 34 regarding those who proclaim themselves, or who allow others to proclaim them, as rabbis, ‘fathers’, leaders and pastors/shepherds.

they are the very Ones in which the Holy One would have us trust as we walk out Torah, respond to the prophets, continue in the apostle's teaching, and fine-tune our spiritual eyes, ears, and understanding in the course of our eternal quest for truth.

Understanding the Realm – and Danger - of ‘Other Voices’

We should be aware that there are many *competing voices* – competing voices that speak much more loudly, and cater to our flesh a whole lot more than the Holy One's sources. *Beware these*, Dear Reader. The Holy One wants us to know - up front - that He will not use certain sources of “information” the world – and our flesh – are drawn to.

1. The Gossips

First of all, He will not utilize the gossipmongers of our community to reveal truth to His People. If it is gossip, or if one you know to be inclined to gossip said it, *disbelieve it instantly. Run from it.* Whether the gossip, rumor, or slanderous statement is about an acquaintance, a political leader, a religious organization or leader, or otherwise, it is to be considered “*dis-information*”. It does not, the Holy One would say, assist you at all in your pursuit of truth. It is noxious. It is *dangerous*. Don't *taste it*. Don't *sniff it*. Don't *linger where it is spilled*. Imagine a skull and crossbones printed on the lips of the one who speaks it in your hearing. It is TOXIC WASTE. Do not let yourself be *contaminated by it*. And for heaven sakes do not allow yourself to contaminate anyone else by spreading the dis-information.

2. The Hirelings

Secondly, the Holy One will almost never utilize the talking heads of the political systems, the media outlets of nations, or the religious leaders of competing movements to dispense the truth that He sends forth to guide His Redeemed. He will almost never rely upon talk-radio or religious television personalities (be they conservative or liberal, reform or mainstream, Christian, Jewish, or agnostic) to inform or advise His chosen ones as to how to live their lives or interpret current events.

The Holy One is far too wise to entrust life-affecting truth to such people. They may have great talents, and they may have good hearts, but at essence they are above all else *hirelings*. And thus however well-intentioned they may be when they start out they inevitably grow dependent upon the organizations and ‘ministries’ they create for money, prestige, and feelings of self-importance. This means that they must curry favor with the people who give them their platform and pay their salaries. Hence they cannot, however much they might wish to, speak the truth in a consistent and meaningful manner. All such people

get from the Holy One is “*line upon line*” data – unconnected, incoherent snippets of information that can be interpreted any way they choose (and which therefore *mean absolutely nothing to anyone*). Their contribution is to make such snippets [a] entertaining, and [b] seemingly more significant, important, and revelatory than they are.

The Holy One knows - and wants us to know - that political, religious, and media personalities – however well intentioned - each have an *agenda*, an *ulterior motive*, for what they say. He wants us to know and understand that such people, whether they mean to or not, cannot be trusted to handle ‘truth’ in any meaningful way *because they simply have too much personal kingdom and influence at stake*. The Holy One’s truth in its pure, unadulterated form is, you see, is *the death knell for market share, for funding [or charitable contributions] and public opinion polls*. Hence, those who see themselves as ‘in leadership’ have no choice but to focus on and disseminate only information that has ‘*entertainment value*’ – that which will SELL, will increase viewer/listener ratings and market share. They have to deliver ‘bang for the buck’. It’s the way the system works. That is just the way it is. Verily, verily, *they have their reward in full*. [See and meditate on Matthew 6]. We absolutely must wean ourselves from such untrustworthy sources³ - from *gossips* on the one hand and from *hirelings* on the other. They are ‘other voices’ - *voices of a stranger* - to us. They do not speak for our Bridegroom. And for us that should be *enough said*.

3. Other Voices the Holy One Wants us To Learn to Recognize and Avoid

Our Bridegroom-King does not want our ears, our minds, or our hearts polluted by any poison created by the lips of men. So He also warns not to *sh’ma* - or give any credence or credibility at all to, the statements of – the following easily recognizable ‘voices of the darkness’:

a. a person who is wise in his own eyes/trusts his own ‘feelings’

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

[Proverbs 26:12]

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.

[Proverbs 12:15]

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool

³ This does not mean we are to hate such people, consider them as ‘enemies’, or wage smear campaigns against them or their organizations, churches, synagogues, or ‘ministries’. That would be just as wrong as what they are doing. We are merely to see them for the fallible people they are. And we are definitely not to ‘submit to them’, seek to curry their favor, nor look to them, much less rely upon them, for any meaningful assistance in our quest for the Holy One’s highest and best truth.

[Proverbs 28:26a]

b. **a person who delights to give his or her opinion**

A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.

[Proverbs 18:2]

c. **a boaster/braggart; one who claims credit for good works or ideas**

The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.

[Psalm 5:5]

d. **a quarrelsome person**

It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.

[Proverbs 20:3]

e. **any angry, outraged person**

An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.

[Proverbs 29:22]

The wrath of man can never produce the righteousness of God.

[James 1:19]

f. **a flatterer**

May the Holy One cut off all flattering lips.

[Psalm 12:3]

g. **a slanderer**

Let not a slanderer be established in the earth.

[Psalm 140:11a]

Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

[Proverbs 10:18]

h. **one who keeps talking about his feelings**

A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.

[Proverbs 29:11]

i. **a scoffer/mocker**

Blessed is the man who ... sits not in the seat of the scornful.

[Psalm 1:1c]

The scoffer/mocker is an abomination to men.

[Proverbs 24:9b]

Cast out the scoffer/mocker, and contention will leave;

Yes, strife and reproach will cease.

[Proverbs 22:10]

Note that all these ‘*voices of the dark*’ speak to the temporal, sensual flesh aspects of fallen man – i.e. to our most carnal emotions, to our occult craving for pseudo-intelligence, to our lust for outrage, and to our self-will; the Voice of

the Holy One, and the voices of the ‘good news’ people who serve Him, on the other hand, always speak to, and stir up the deep reservoirs of love, joy, hope and *shalom* in, the eternal spirit in man – *i.e.* his God-breathed *neshamah*, *nefesh*, and *ruach*.

The Ultimate Key to Unlock the Doors of Redemption and Restoration

For the Holy One’s people *the key* in the search for Wisdom is to avoid “plugging” or “overloading” our organs of spiritual perception with “garbage”. We must not overwork our *eyes* by constantly absorbing whatever is broadcast by the media outlets, entertainment moguls, ‘educational systems’, governments, philosophies, ideologies, and religious institutions of men. We must not overwork our *ears* by constantly listening to talk radio, our favorite CDs, or the sermons or seminar tapes of the latest ‘star’ of the religious world. We must not overwork our *hearts* by substituting high intensity, high investment/low return “worship services” and ministry commitments for a *lifestyle of worshipping our Creator and covenant partner*. If we do not overwork and plug our hearts and minds up with such things, the spiritual senses the Holy One has given us will tell us what we *need* to know⁴. Because after all, *the Holy One is constantly speaking to us*. All we have to do is *sh’ma* His Voice – and *lo sh’ma* the voice of every other.

Four Crucial Principles For Recognizing and Dealing With the ‘Voice of Another’

The Holy One wants us to keep *four crucial things* in mind every time we hear any human being start to speak critically about any other human being.

Crucial Rule of Application #1: *Lo tisa shema shav*

The first thing our Divine Bridegroom wants us to keep in mind as we listen to one person speak ill of another is the principle of *lo tisa shema shav*. The Holy One said:

Lo tisa shema shav

*You will not take up/give credibility to an accusatory or misleading narrative –
i.e. to any uncorroborated statement]*

Crucial Rule of Application #2: *Al tashet yadcha*

The second thing our Covenant Partner in Heaven wants us to keep in mind as we listen to one person speak ill of another is the principle of *al tashet yadcha*.

⁴ The Torah is, of course, the ‘filter’ through which we process and interpret all the messages received through our spiritual eyes, ears, and understanding. The Holy One will never contradict the Torah. It is the standard by which all revelation is measured, and against which all things claiming to be revelation are to be compared.

The Holy One said:

al-tashet yadcha im-rasha lihyot ed chamas

You are not to join your hand with rasha spreading malicious testimony.

Crucial Rule of Application #3: *Lo-tihyeh acharei rabim*

The third thing the Holy One wants us to keep in mind as we listen to one person speak ill of another is the principle of ***lo-tihyeh acharei rabim***. The Holy One said:

Lo-tihyeh acharei-rabim l'ra'at

Do not get caught up in the way of the majority, for it leads to disaster.

[Exodus 23:2]

Covenant with the Holy One means trusting in *Him* to advise us regarding what is important. That, in turn, requires us to forfeit a “right to know” sordid details that are none of our business. It also requires us to surrender all our preconceived notions concerning - and all our emotional and ideological baggage relative to - who is ‘right’ and who is ‘wrong’, who is ‘good’ and who is ‘evil’, what is ‘moral’ and what is ‘immoral’, and what is ‘fair’ and what is ‘unfair’.

The *lo-tihyeh* message of our Bridegroom-King is one that is very hard for Americans – or any people who believes in democracy⁵ – to accept. In a democracy, you see, the will of the majority is all-important. The vote of the majority determines elections and policy. The consensus of the majority determines priorities and value judgments. But the Holy One’s word tells us, whether we want to hear it or not, that the majority’s voice is seldom - if ever – going to be in harmony with His Voice. The majority will, unfortunately, almost always be *wrong* - out of sync in some dangerous, sometimes fatal way, with what the Holy One says. The Holy One’s people must always be prepared to go *against the flow*, however politically incorrect that may be. *Why?* Just to be “different”? No, because the way of thinking of the majority *leads to disaster*.

If therefore you find yourself agreeing with *the majority* on any issue, stop, get on your face, and PRAY! Seek an encounter with the Holy One where He reveals His counsel to your soul and spirit. Lest you – and your family - get caught up in, and bear the scars of - the inevitable ‘Tower of Babel’ type disaster to which majority opinion – political, moral or religious - always leads.

⁵ The United States was not established as a *democracy*, but as a *constitutional republic*. The difference is very significant, for in a *democracy*, the majority [which Torah says always takes the path to destruction] must always rule, while in a republic, popular opinion is just one voice taken into consideration.

Crucial Rule of Application #4: *Lo-ta'aneh al riv lintot acharei rabim*

The fourth thing the Holy One wants us to keep in mind as we listen to one person speak ill of another is the principle of *Lo-ta'aneh al riv lintot acharei rabim*. The Holy One said in this regard:

v'lo-ta'aneh al-riv lintot acharei rabim l'hatot

neither are you to testify in a way that sides with a multitude to pervert justice;

The Holy One wants us to understand that *there is almost always a substantial difference between what a man with a vested interest to advance says happened in a given situation and what really happened*. We are not supposed to simply take any man's word that another human being has done something wrong, or caused him harm. Put another way, we are not to judge by the 'hearing of our ears' – but are to employ *procedural safeguards* that keep us from taking up our neighbor's offense or cause, and 'feeling his pain', and focus instead on what reasonable steps, if any, need to be taken in the future. Our purpose is never to look for someone to *blame* for the problems and injustices in our world – our purpose is, instead, to *employ Torah principles to resolve disputes*. Our focus, in interpersonal dealings, is always to be on *building a better future, not on wallowing in the wrongs – actual or perceived – that have been done in the past*. But wait – there is *more!*

We Are to Be Neither Respecters of Persons nor Populist Crusaders

The Holy One also cautions us not to be respecters of persons, nor are we to 'play Robin Hood', taking from the rich and powerful and giving to the poor, in an attempt to enforce our own view of 'social justice'.

Vedal lo tehedar b'rivo

Neither shall you favor a poor man in his cause.

This is an instruction that we as the Holy One's people have stumbled over for a long time. We see what we consider 'injustices' in the world, and we think we could 'fix' them if we could just redistribute a little wealth - especially *someone else's wealth!*. But this is the exact opposite of what the Holy One tells us we are to do. Torah tells us that we are, in the course of administering justice, actually to respect the rights - and honor the participation in society - of both the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless. This means, among other things, that we are not to look for excuses to take money or property from the rich that they are not willing to voluntarily give. Instead, only if a *specific* rich man owes compensation to a *specific* poor person based upon a *specific* act of wrongdoing by that rich man, are the judges of our Redeemed Community to get involved. Even then, they are merely to order fair and equitable compensation for the wrong in question – nothing more - to be paid to the poor man by the rich man [or, if the situation calls for it, *vice versa*].

Funny – it seems that the Holy One our God actually expects us to trust HIM – instead of our own sense of societal right and wrong - to redistribute wealth as and when necessary. Perhaps the point is that our calling and purpose on earth is not, as some have thought, to be crusaders for - of champions of - ‘*social justice*’. Perhaps the idea of ‘social justice’ is simply too subjective to be a part of our life mission. And perhaps crusading for and/or championing social justice is an endeavor that invariably draws too much attention to ourselves, and hence does not honor the Holy One.

But What About Issues of Social Injustice, Civil Rights, and Religious Liberty?

This does not mean that our Covenant Partner in Heaven does not care about social injustice. It does not mean that the Holy One is unconcerned about civil rights. It does not mean that He is ambivalent about religious liberty. What it means is that *the standard of social justice we are to follow is the Torah of the Holy One – and nothing more*. In other words, if we see a brother or sister in what we perceive as a state of need, and want to personally utilize some of the moneys, properties and/or time the Holy One has entrusted to us to assist the poor brother or sister to meet his or her daily needs and/or to ‘get back on his own two feet’, the Holy One explains precisely how we are – and are not - to do so. That is the reason the Holy One is going to go into detail, in coming sections of Torah, regarding setting aside the ‘*corner of the field*’ and ‘*gleanings of the harvest*’ instructions, regarding the making of no-interest ‘*loans*, regarding accepting the ‘*servanthood*’ of a destitute brother under appropriate conditions, and regarding setting aside the *third-year tithe* for the benefit of the needy in our community. If we follow those instructions, we will bring honor to the Holy One – not ourselves.

While the Holy One instructs the individual in detail what assistance he or she should personally give of the resources He places in the individual’s hands, He seems to be making it pretty clear that, in His Redeemed Community, the strong hand of civil government, including but not limited to the taxing authority, it would appear, are not to be the source through which wealth is redistributed.

Always Keep in Mind Who Is Really In Charge

You see, the Holy One wants us to know that it is HE, not us, not our government, not our religious organizations, Who is ‘*in charge*’. In questionable cases, therefore, is far better for us to *let the guilty go free* than it is to punish the innocent. Since the Holy One is in charge, we can rest assured that, whatever the courts of man decide [or do not decide], *the guilty will*

ultimately get justice. And also, because the Holy One is in charge, we can also rest assured that, whatever the courts of man decide [or do not decide], the injured will ultimately be compensated. Hence, the Holy One also tells Moshe to set before our faces the following words:

Mid'var-sheker tirschak

*Keep far from a **false** [or baseless] charge,*

V'naki'i v'tzadik al-taharog

*and don't **accuse/kill the innocent and righteous:***

ki lo-atzdik rasha

*for I will not **justify the wicked.***

Eschew The Gift or Favor that Comes With 'Strings Attached'

There are several things humans sometimes do that the Holy One absolutely hates. One of those things is to accept a BRIBE. The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'bribe' is *shochad*⁶. The literal meaning of the word is a present, or a gift, that as we say it today, has 'strings attached'.

We are not to accept a gift or favor of any kind if we know our acceptance of it will make us more likely to side with the giver than a person with whom the giver may have a conflict or controversy. Here is the way the Holy One puts it:

V'shochad lo tikach

*You are not to take any **bribe,***

ki ha-shochad ye'aver pikchim

for a bribe blinds those who have sight

visalef div'rei tzadikim

and perverts the words of the righteous.

[Exodus 23:8]

Concerning 'Enemies'

The Holy One also makes it clear in this aliyah that He fully understands – and wants us to realize - that, even in the context of the Redeemed Community, we are simply never going to *like* everybody – and that everybody will certainly not like *us*. We will, even in the midst of a redeemed covenant community, always have “enemies”. From whence will come these enemies? Well, some we will come to think of as enemies *because they have wronged us* [or at least we perceive them to have done so]. If the truth be known, however, a far greater number we will just not like *because of their looks, or their attitude* [as we perceive it], or their *politics, or their 'doctrines', or their associations* – or maybe, just maybe, because we will, despite our best intentions and protestations of innocence,

⁶ *Shochad* is *shin, chet, dalet*, Strong's Hebrew word #7810, pronounced *sho-khawd'*.

secretly envy their position of prestige, power or wealth.

What was that we said earlier about the Holy One's words penetrating even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart? The truth of the matter that the Holy One wants us to recognize, Beloved, is that some in our community will also "hate" us, and consider us enemies, *for the exact same reasons we 'hate' them, and consider them enemies – and that, despite knowing all this about us, the Holy One still loves us – and our enemies – with exactly the same amount of love.* We are not therefore to be overly idealistic or sentimental about the 'unity' of the Redeemed Community. All relationships, even among those who know the Holy One as Redeemer, are potential seedbeds of *hate* and *enmity*. Don't wring your hands and say "Oh, my!" *Press on anyway!*

Loving our Enemies – An Idea as Old as Torah!

Many have been led to believe that Messiah started a new religion with His teachings about "loving" our enemies. This is not at all the case. Torah has always told us that one true test of whether we truly love the Holy One is in *how we deal with "enemies" and those who hate us.* Here is what the Holy One told Moshe to teach us even before He instructed us in how to build the Tabernacle, pray, give offerings, or celebrate the feasts:

Ki tifga shor oyveicha o chamoro to'eh

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray,

hashev teshiveinu lo

bring it back to him again.

Ki-tir'eh chamor sona'acha rovetz tachat masa'o v'chadalta

If you see the donkey of him who hates you fallen down under his burden,

me'azov lo azov ta'azov imo

don't leave him - help him with it.

[Exodus 23:4-5]

The love we are to show our enemies according to Torah is not mushy, noisy, self-serving sentimentalism. Torah does not permit us just to declare - to the other person, to the Holy One, or to ourselves - 'I love' or 'I forgive', and consider the relational problem solved and the matter at an end. The kind of love of enemies Torah requires consists of *real, tangible, practical assistance.*

The Holy One's Comprehensive Plan for Dealing With the Poor in Our Midst

The Holy One's instructions to Moshe were not only to teach our Community how He wants us to relate to and deal with not only our "enemies", and those

who “hate” us, but also to teach us how He wants us to relate to and deal with two other groups of people – the *poor* and the *sojourner*. [He will later speak of widows and the fatherless]. Here are our King’s instructions:

Lo tateh mishpat evyoncha b’rivo

You are not to deny justice to your poor people in their controversies.

[Exodus 23:6]

Vedal lo tehedar berivo

[But] neither shall you favor a poor man in his cause

[Exodus 23:3]

V’shesh shanim tizra et-artzeicha

For six years you shall sow your land,

v’asafu et-tvu’atah

and shall gather in its increase,

V’ha-shevi’it tishmetenah unetashtah

but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow,

v’achlu evyonei ameicha

that the poor of your people may eat;

v’yitram tochal chayat ha-sadeh

and what they leave the animal of the field shall eat.

ken-ta’aseh l’charmeicha l’zeyteicha

In like manner you shall deal with your vineyard and with your olive grove.

* * *

v’ger lo tilchatz v’atem yedatem et-nefesh ha-ger

And do not oppress a foreigner, for you know what it is like to be a foreigner,

ki-gerim heyitem b’eretz Mitzrayim

seeing you were foreigners in the land of Mitzrayim.

The Holy One wants us to know that in His eyes our covenant relationship never involves only what we BELIEVE, in how much we *talk the talk*, much less in how well we do religious stuff like singing, teaching, preaching, praying for an audience. He is not impressed with any of the stuff that we are. What He is keenly interested in is whether or not we are making progress toward fulfilling our purpose and destiny as His covenant people. He wants to know if His chosen Bride-to-Be is becoming the ‘*eishet chayil*’ [woman of virtue] He has called and empowered us to be. Hence, out of love for us and all mankind, the Holy One from time to time strategically places *poor people* and *people whose appearance, speech, and ways are foreign to us* in our lives as a test to see *how like Him we are becoming* in the course of all our believing and all our pious religious activities. Did not the Messiah teach the exact same thing?

The Shabbat and the Sh’losh Regalim

How well we care for the poor and the foreigner in our midst is not, of course, the only test of our spirituality and faithfulness to His covenant calling the Holy One has programmed into the Torah. In a subsequent section of today's aliyah, the Holy One instructs Moshe to lay out for us certain truths about how we are to approach and deal with certain recurring moments in time – first, the 7th Day *Shabbat* [Sabbath] and then the three *sh'losh regalim*, or pilgrimage festivals, He has established for all who worship Him as *moed'im* [Divine Appointments at which we are to engage in Prophetic Rehearsals of Future Messianic Events]. Part of what we are called upon by the Holy One to do in this life, you see, is to reconsider our relationship with the phenomenon we know as “time”. Time is, we will find, our *stage* - not our *enemy*. Time is *a precious gift from The Holy One* to mankind. But always remember this: *The Holy One pre-existed time, and is in no way bound by it*. He created it for us, as a stage upon which to live out our lives. The Holy One has lovingly established and carefully planned all the days, the seasons, the years, and the decades of your life and mine. In His wisdom, He planned our dates of conception and birth, our dates to meet Messiah Yeshua, and, indeed, our dates of death and resurrection. *Selah!*

Know as well, Dear Reader, that the Holy One has also established and carefully planned for mankind the centuries and the millennia of the “stage” we call time. He has set “mile-markers” along the way - Shabbats, and Prophetic rehearsals for the Messianic Kingdom. He gives us instructions on how to *sanctify time* [fill our time up with the maximum amount of His holiness]. The dates we are instructed to sanctify have never changed - and will not change. They are keyed to the Holy One's timetable. The question is, are *we*?

Sanctification of Time Mission #1 –

Special Instructions For Maintaining the Kedusha of the 7th Day Shabbat

Here are the Holy One's specific instructions at this juncture regarding the *Shabbat*:

Sheshet yamim ta'aseh ma'aseicha

Six days you are to do your creative work,

uvayom ha-shvi'i tish'bot

and on the seventh day you are to rest,

l'ma'an yanuach shorcha v'chamoreicha

in order that your ox and your donkey may have rest,

veyinafesh ben-amatcha vehager

and the son of your handmaid, and the alien may be refreshed.

[Exodus 23:12]

***Sanctification of Time Mission #2 –
Participating in the Sh’losh Regalim***

Sanctification of time does not end with the commemoration of the 7th day Shabbat. The Holy One also gives us instructions regarding three special times during the year when we are going to be called ‘front and center’, and make pilgrimage to Y’rushalayim. Later in Torah the Holy One is going to give us even more ‘special days’ to commemorate, and is also going to get much more specific about how specifically how He wants us to commemorate the days he considers holy. For now, however, the Holy One merely wants Moshe to lay out the basic principle underlying the *mo’edim*. Hence even before the Redeemed Community leaves Sinai - much less establishes the capital of His earthly kingdom at Y’rushalayim - the Holy One tells Moshe:

*You are to observe **Sh’losh regalim** - three pilgrimage celebrations - for Me each year
Cherish and be careful to observe **chag ha-matzot** - i.e. the festival of matzah.*

*Seven days you are to eat matzah, as I spoke to you,
L’mo’ed - at the time appointed - in the month Aviv
(for in it you came out from Mitzrayim),*

***v’lo-ya’u fanay reykam** – i.e. and no one is to appear before me empty-handed*

***V’chag ha-katzir** - And the festival of ingathering
of the first fruits of your labors, which you sow in the field:*

***v’chag ha-asif** – i.e. and a festival of ingathering
b’tzet ha-shanah - at the end of the year
when you gather in your labors out of the field.*

***Sh’losh pe’amim b’shanah** – i.e. three times in the year
all your males are to come to a face-to-FACE meeting
with the Holy One your GOD.*

[Exodus 23: 14-17]

When the Holy One told us what He wanted us to do to meet with Him and in His Name He did not tell us to build churches or synagogues or mosques or temples or shrines or altars of any kind in our communities. He did not tell us to schedule weekly worship services at convenient locations at which we could sing, study, or fellowship with either like-minded folks or ‘seekers’. What He told us instead was that He would meet with us face-to-Face three times a year in connection with specific pre-programmed moments in time. I wonder what would happen if we ever started to take the Holy One’s instructions in this regard seriously. I know it is a radical idea. Forgive me please for having the audacity to bring it up. But still I cannot help wondering what would happen – what effect it would have on planet earth - if we actually took a step back from all the stuff we are doing ‘in His Name’ and focused our spiritual energies instead on [1] meditating on and teaching our children the Holy One’s Torah,

on [2] applying His instructions for living to the ‘rubber meets the road’ situations of our lives, on [3] caring for the poor, the foreigner, enemies, as the Creative and Prophetic Words He spoke on Sinai empowered us to do, and on [4] getting re-charged and re-commissioned as He said to, simply by resting on the 7th Day Shabbat and by personally participating in the Festivals of Pesach/Matzah, the first Ingathering [Shavuot], and the second Ingathering [Sukkot].

***Oh, Did I Mention that There Would Be An Angel
With You Wherever You Go?***

The last part of today’s aliyah [verses 20-33] adds shape, texture, and context to the provisions of the *Aseret HaDibrot* where the Holy One indicated that His people will not take His Name lightly and will have no other gods before him. The Holy One tells our ancestors that He is going to send an angel ahead of them - we are instructed to follow this angel, and not rebel against him, because “***My Name is in him***”. Exodus 23:21. The Holy One tells Moshe:

Hineh anochi shole'ach mal'ach l'fanecha

Behold, I send an angel before you,

Lish'morcha b'darech

to sh'mar you in/along the way,

v'laha-vi'acha el-ha-makom asher ha-chinoti

and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

* * *

Ki-yelech mal'achi lefaneicha

For I will send My Messenger/Angel before you/your face

V'hevi'acha el-ha-Emori v'ha-Chiti v'ha-P'rizi

and will bring you in to the Amori, the Hittite, the Perizzi,

v'ha-Kna'ani ha-Chivi v'ha-Yevusi v'hichechadativ

the Kana'ani, the Hivvi, and the Yevusi; and I will cut them off.

Just as the Holy One instructed us in previous portions of this aliyah how to relate to such people as our enemy in the Redeemed Community, the poor, and the sojourner, now He instructs us how to deal with one other force we are going to encounter - the Angel He is sending to guide us. Here is what the Holy One instructs us in this regard:

Hishamer mipanav ush'ma b'kolo

Sh'mar him, and sh'ma his voice.

al-tamer bo ki lo yisa lefish'achem ki shmi b'kirbo

Don't provoke him, for he will not pardon your disobedience, for my name is in him.

Ki im-shamoa tish'ma b'kolo

But if you indeed sh'ma his voice,

v'asita kol asher adaber
and do all that I speak,

v'ayavti et-oyeveicha v'tzarti et-tzorereicha
then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

The Holy One advises us that this “Angel” will lead us into - and through - areas where people have set up altars to other gods. This will present us with some challenges, to test our loyalty to the Holy One. When we come in contact with people who worship other gods, the Holy One’s people are not to bow at their altars either in worship of the “other gods” or even out of a sense of respectfulness toward the people who worship them.

Lo-tish'tachaveh l'eloheihem v'lo to'ovdem
You are not to bow down to their gods, nor serve them,

v'lo ta'aseh kema'aseihem
nor follow their practices,

ki hares teharsem v'shaber teshaber matzevotaihem
but you are to utterly overthrow them and demolish their pillars.

Et-eymati ashalach l'faneicha
I will send my terror before you,

v'hamoti et-kol-ha-am asher tavo bahem
and will confuse all the people to whom you come,

v'natati et-kol-oyveicha eleicha oref
and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.

V'shalachti et-ha-tzir'ah l'faneicha
I will send the hornet before you,

v'gereshah et-ha-Chivi et-ha-K'na'ani v'et-ha-Chiti milfaneych
which will drive out the Hivvi, the Kana'ani, and the Hittite, from before you.

While the Holy One’s people are to be kind to sojourners, and accept foreigners into their society under certain terms [accepting the Holy One as their God, and Torah as their lifestyle], they are not to have a “melting pot” society. No one who worships any other god is to be allowed to live in the land. And under no circumstances are the Holy One’s people to make any covenants or agreements with any of the peoples who worship other gods.

Torah – Politically Incorrect As Always

This teaching of Torah is not “politically correct”. It does not celebrate “diversity” in quite the way our culture (the majority whose path leads to disaster) would promote. But it is the wisdom of the Holy One. The Holy One does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, national origin, color, or age. But, to live in His Community, in the land promised to and set aside for the

descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, all must bow to Him, and bowing to Him requires accepting His instructions for living.

Finally the Holy One concludes by telling us specifically what He wants us to focus our time, energies, and attention on when all this is happening around us – and what the effect will be upon our lives if we do. He says:

V'avadetem et Adonai Eloheichem

You are to serve the Holy One your God

uverach et-l'ch'meicha v'et-meymeicha

and he will bless your bread and your water,

v'ha-siroti machalah mikirbeicha

and I will take sickness away from your midst.

Lo tiyeh meshakeilah v'akarah b'artzeicha

No one will miscarry or be barren in your land.

et-mispar yameicha amalei

I will fulfill the number of your days.

May it occur quickly, and in our days.

Questions for Today's Study

1. Part of what the Holy One tells us about life has to do with words we hear spoken by our fellow human beings. We have to be careful listening to what our fellow humans tell us.

[A] List the instructions He has given concerning gossip and accusing other people of wrongdoing; and

[B] List the instructions He has given concerning not letting anything get in the way of fairness and truth.

2. Just because we are part of a redeemed community that has a covenant relationship with the Holy One does not mean that we will not have enemies – even within the Redeemed community!

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “*enemy*” in verse 4 [Strong's #341, pronounced *o-yabe*']. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew consonants, with vowel markings. Then search out the verb root, and describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around this word.

[B] List the things the Holy One says we are to do to help our “*enemy*” and/or the one who “*hates*” us.

3. The Holy One teaches us how to relate to and deal with not only our “*enemies*” in the Redeemed Community, and those who “*hate*” us, but also how

to relate to and deal with two other groups of people in our midst – the poor and the sojourner.

[A] Look up the words “*poor*”, “*oppress*”, “*stranger*”, and “*refreshed*” in Strong’s and Gesenius. Write each of the Hebrew words (in Hebrew, with vowel markings, and in English transliteration) and describe the Hebraic word pictures that you see in connection with each such word.

[B] Considering the definitions you have found, who are the “poor”?

[C] Considering the definitions you have found, who are the “aliens”?

[D] Much focus is put on the 7th year *sh’mittah*. This, however, is a simple matter of not planting or reaping. I would like to focus our attention instead on the message the Holy One is giving us regarding *the 6 years preceding the sh’mittah*. What does He tell us we are to do in the 6 years preceding the *sh’mittah*, and how is *this* going to benefit the poor?

[E] Likewise, the Holy One makes it clear that the 7th day Shabbat is to serve a purpose beneficial the poor and the alien/foreigner. How does our taking a Shabbat rest benefit the poor and the alien/foreigner?

[F] What are we to do during the six days preceding the Shabbat, in order that the benefit to the poor, the foreigner, and ourselves can be maximized?

4. What do the *mishpatim* contained in 23:1-8 teach you about the Holy One’s character, personality, values, and priorities?

5. In the second section of today’s aliyah Moshe discusses the *Shabbat* [Sabbath] and the three *sh’losh regalim*, or pilgrimage festivals, He has established for all who worship Him as *moed’im* [Divine Appointments/Prophetic Rehearsals of Future Messianic Events].

[A] What are the Holy One’s people to do (and not do) every seventh year?

[B] What purpose is this to serve, and who is to benefit?

[C] What are the Holy One’s people to do (and not do) every seventh day?

[D] What purpose is this to serve, and who is to benefit?

[E] In verse 13 the Holy One instructs us that we are to “be careful” to do everything He has said concerning the Sabbaths. In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew word translated as “careful” in this verse. Write the word in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings, and define it in the pa’al verb form.

[F] The Holy One also tells us in verse 13 [a] not to call upon any other god for any reason, and [b] not even to speak the name of any other god in conversation. Why do you think He gives this instruction?

[G] At what three festivals does the Holy One say all men should “appear before” Him?

[H] What specific instructions does the Holy One give about the celebration of these three *mo'edim* [appointments with the Holy One; prophetic rehearsals; festivals] in verses 15,18-19?

[I] At the time these instructions concerning the *sh'losh regalim* were given, there was no Temple, no Tabernacle, and no Aharonic priesthood or Levitical ministry. Hence it would appear that they represent timeless, eternal principles which apply irrespective of geography [i.e. whether we can get to Jerusalem or not.] If [as now] there is no Tabernacle, no Temple, and no Aharonic Priesthood or Levitical ministry, where are we to go to “appear before [the Holy One], and what are we to do when we get there so that we do not “appear before Him empty-handed”?

[J] What do the *mishpatim* contained in verses 9-19 tell you about the Holy One's character, personality, values, and priorities?

6. As the third section of today's aliyah begins the Holy One promises that He will send an “angel” before the Redeemed Community as they trek toward the land flowing with milk and honey which He promised to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya'akov, and to their descendants forever. Then finally the Holy One concludes our aliyah by telling us what to focus our time, energies, and attention on when all this is happening around us – and what the effect will be upon our lives.

[A] Look up the word “angel”, as used in this passage, in Strong's and in Gesenius. Write the Hebrew word used in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings, and in English transliteration, and the definitions given by Gesenius. Also, look up “angel” in the “Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols” or some other source and write on your paper one or two notes about what the author says there;

[B] What, according to our text, is this “angel” sent to do?

[C] How are those in covenant with the Holy One to respond to the “angel”?

[D] What will the “angel” have no power to do?

[E] Read Isaiah 63:1-14. What does that tell you about the “angel”?

[F] With regard to the *mishpatim* contained in verses 20 - 33, what do they tell you about the Holy One's character, personality, values, and priorities?

[G] Do not forget that what we are reading is a *shitre eyrusin*, or covenant of betrothal. List all the promises the Holy One makes to His betrothed in verses 22-31.

[H] What instructions does the Holy One give about how His people are to deal with the native people of the land, and why?

7. In today's Haftarah aliyah the Holy One continues discussing what judgment awaits those who participated in willfully rejecting His *mishpatim* (in the particular instance of reneging on a promise to let slaves who had served six

years go free as the Torah requires, and then forcing people to be slaves against their will).

*I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant,
who have not performed the words of the covenant
which they made before me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it;
the princes of Y'hudah, and the princes of Y'rushalayim,
the eunuchs, and the Kohanim, and all the people of the land,
who passed between the parts of the calf;*

*I will even give them into the hand of their enemies,
and into the hand of those who seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for food
to the birds of the sky, and to the animals of the eretz.*

[Jeremiah 34:18-20]

[A] What does the Holy One promise to do personally to the individuals who broke their vow?

[B] What does the Holy One promise to do to the religious leaders and friends of the individuals who broke their vow (apparently because the religious leaders and friends of these individuals did not stand up for what was right and confront the individuals in question)?

[C] What, in your opinion was the “unpardonable” sin of these people? What was it about their sin that caused the Holy One to inflict the death penalty?

8. In today’s B’rit Chadasha aliyah Shaul of Tarsus discusses the Corinthians’ attitude toward him and his Jewish rabbi-like ways, and asks for them to reconsider with whom they have taken sides based upon the false reports to which they have listened.

*Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians. Our heart is enlarged.
You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.
Now in return, I speak as to my children, you also be open wide.
Don't be unequally yoked with **those who lo sh'ma** [unbelievers],
for what fellowship have **tzadikim** [righteous ones]
with **those who reject Torah** [i.e. the lawless]?
Or what communion has **ohr** [light] with **choshech** [darkness]?*
[2 Corinthians 6:11-14]

[A] How did Shaul describe his attitude toward the Corinthians?

[B] How did Shaul describe the Corinthians’ attitude toward him?

[C] Now that you have read the “do not be unequally yoked” passage [II Cor. 6:14] **in context**, what do you think it really means? [i.e. if rephrased in modern language, what would it say?]

*May the Holy One’s truth and the Holy One’s ways consume all your energies,
as you sanctify each moment of the time He has given you.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:25-32

*My soul is laid low in the dust - revive me according to your word!
I declared my ways, and you answered me.
Teach me your statutes.
Let me understand the teaching of your precepts!
Then I will meditate on your wondrous works.*

*My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.
Keep me from the way of deceit;
grant me your Torah graciously!
I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your Torah.
I cling to your statutes, O Holy One;
don't let me be disappointed.
I run in the path of your mitzvot –
for you have set my heart free!*