

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Mishpatim:*** Exodus 21:35 - 22:31
 Haftarah: Jeremiah 34:12-17
 B'rit Chadasha: II Corinthians 6:3-10

You are to become men set apart for and unto Me.

[Exodus 22:31]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:17-24;

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

Vechi-yigof shor-ish et-shor rei'eihu – if/when one person's ox injures another person's ox Exodus 21:35a.

The Redeemed Community has finally found a place of rest – at the base of Mount Sinai. The newly betrothed *am segulah* of the Creator has chosen to 'remain at a distance'² from action for now. So far, knowing experientially and interacting personally with the Holy One intimately has proven to be *too overwhelming a prospect* for us. We tend to be more comfortable just being told what to do – like we were trained to do in Egypt. We have no concept of either our Bridegroom-King's goodness or His Great Eternal Plan of Redemption for mankind and Creation. We are fine with Moshe giving us a few rules to follow to keep our exercises of individual freedom from crashing into each other and ruining everything. Right now, however, we are in 'bless me'-mode – not in 'I love you, and I am Yours'-mode. We are in 'feed me with raisins and apple cakes' mode – not 'where-so-ever You go I will go, and where-so-ever You lodge I will lodge'-mode. We are in 'high-maintenance shrew'-mode – not 'pure-and-spotless-bride'-mode. *Selah!*

This is not a permanent situation. We simply have no framework of reference for intimate fellowship with the Creator in real time. Someone has to be a forerunner in exploring and mapping out that kind of intimate communion with the Holy One in this confused generation – and Moshe is that guy. He knows it is his assigned task – and inestimable privilege - to push the envelope of God-man relations. He knows it is his honor to lead the way in bringing Heaven to earth. Moshe therefore *pressed on* – and presses on still. Aided by *the mediation of Moshe* and Messiah, the Holy One will teaching us how to *think like the Holy One thinks* - in order that one day we can actually *be who the Holy One redeemed us to be*, say what the

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² Exodus 20:21 [a].

Holy One would say in each situation, and do what the Holy One redeemed us to do.

But What of the Multitudes of People Down Below?

Far below us, beneath the cloud of thick darkness, our shell-shocked forbearers have no idea what is happening in the Cloud. All they know is that when they recoiled in fear from the Manifest Presence of the Holy One Moshe wrapped his robe around his waist, grabbed his staff, and pressed on without them. Un-phased, the prophet pushed his 80-year-old frame up the mountain as if he were a teenager. He was constrained by Divine love; propelled forward by mercy. His highest passion – unlike ours - was to *sh'ma* [*i.e. tune the heart to, hear, take in, understand, meditate upon, and begin to get in rhythm with*] every single word that the Divine Bridegroom had to say. He knew that opportunities like this – to actually meet personally with the Creator of the Universe and commune intimately with Him and learn His thoughts and His ways – do not come along very often in life. So Moshe shook his head, girded up his loins, and *climbed the steepest part of the mountain alone*. He has not been seen or heard from by any human being since.

So ... What Exactly Is Going On Up There?

In Moshe's absence *life goes on*. Every morning [except of course the morning of the Sabbath] manna falls from Heaven all around the camp. Every morning we go out *en masse* and gather manna; we take it by the basketfull back to the camp; we prepare food from it. We quench our thirst from the great stream of living water that pulses from the Rock of Refidim. The ten Divine Utterances the Holy One spoke over us still ring in our ears - and *send shock waves through our souls*. We have so much to process – so much to think about.

Enjoying the View from 'Up Here'

While you and I, Dear Reader, are up with Moshe and the Holy One atop the mountain, eavesdropping on *the mishpatim discourse*, it behooves to pause for a moment, clear our heads, breathe in the cool, fresh, holy air, take advantage of the perspective, and look somewhere far, far away ... somewhere in the far, far distant future. The things the Holy One is talking about, you see, are not *temporal matters*. He is not addressing immediate needs in the camp. He is instead pointing us ahead to a time *far in the future*. Consider in this regard the Holy One's plan for mankind during *the Millennium*³. During that period of time, *Messiah will reign as King*

³ The term 'millennium' is a contraction of the Latin words *mille* [meaning 1000] and *annus* [meaning years]. Six times in chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation a 1,000-year period of Messianic kingdom is referenced. It is unclear whether the period in question is literally 1,000 solar years in length [according to whose calendar?], or whether the 1000-year reference is merely a metaphoric incorporation of the message of Psalm 90 [which says, regarding the Holy One's time of judgment, that '*1000 years in Your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.*' Psalm 90:4.

over all peoples of the earth, and will judge all things⁴. Psalm 2:6-12; Psalm 96:10-13; Psalm 110:2; Micah 4:1-3; Zechariah 14:5-9; Revelation 20:4-7.

Welcome to Life in a Fallen World, Full of Dangerous Creatures - and Imperfect People

We asked for the Holy One to communicate His Plans for us through Moshe – and that is exactly what He is doing. The Voice of the Creator of the Universe is speaking to Moshe about ... *oxen? Seriously?* Not mysterious secrets of the Universe? Not organizational models? Not fundraising programs? Not sacraments? Not theological bullet points? No, not today, at least. Today He wants to talk about ordinary things like controversies that arise between men when ... well, let's just say when bad things happen to good oxen. Mind blown. But if this - rather than religious stuff - is what our Bridegroom-King wants to talk about, well ... some questions come to mind. First of all, *who is the 'one man'* – and who is *the other*. Is either of these guys a friend of mine? An enemy? *And where on earth did the oxen come from?* I have ever owned an ox – nor known anyone who does. *And wherever these oxen came from, and wherever each was going, and whatever each was doing, how exactly did one ox wind up getting hurt?*

At least for now, it is all a drill. There is no need to call 9-1-1. None of what I described in the opening paragraph actually happened. The whole scenario is just a *hypothetical* – a teaching tool. There is no man lying on the ground, oozing blood. There is *no ox running loose*. And there is *no injury*. There is *no reason for raw emotion*. There is no reason to cast blame - or choose sides. There is no reason for anyone to cop an attitude. There is no reason to forfeit our *shalom*. This, like everything in the *Mishpatim Discourse*, is *just presented as a rhetorical question*. The issue is therefore not *who is to blame*, or *how bad someone's conduct was* - the issue is simply *where do we all go from here?* The issue is *how do we fix this* - and *put it behind us* - and help those affected deal with it and *move on?* Take a deep breath, Beloved. This is not law; this is wisdom and compassion, delicately balanced, poured out from Heaven like the healing balm of Gilead.

Two important Questions We Need to Ask When 'Bad Things' Happen to 'Good People'

The first question that the troublesome set of hypothetical fact situations the Holy One presents for our instruction in today's aliyah is:

⁴ Much of traditional Judaism sees the Messianic age as a time when the Hebrew people will regain their independence and return to the land of Israel, where the Messiah will reign as king. The Messiah's righteousness and wonders will cause people from all tribes, tongues and nations to want to make peace with him and to serve him voluntarily. The prophet Isaiah's prediction that "*the wolf shall live with the sheep, the leopard shall lie down with the kid*" is generally considered an allegory, meaning that Jews will be able to live safely even in formerly hostile nations.

Do You Know and Love the Bridegroom King With All Your Heart, such that You Are Ready and Willing to Spend Your Life Learning to Think Like He Thinks, to Stay Redemption-Focused, and to Speak and Bring Light, Life, Love, and Hope Into Every Situation You Encounter?

OR

Do You Just Want to get a basic familiarity with and Stay Under the Radar of A Set of Minimum Performance Standards, While You Criticize and Judge People and Groups Around You That You Feel Are Not Currently Meeting Those Standards To Your Satisfaction?

The second question the troublesome set of hypothetical fact situations the Holy One presents is:

Do you want to learn and start to employ the Holy One's tree of life approach to life's challenges, namely:

- **Step One**: *Assess the situation or challenge using the lens of a Humble Heart and the Holy One's 'Redemption-Focused Eyes',*
- **Step Two**: *Lay the situation, and all people involved, before the Holy One's Throne, making it a Kingdom's best interest challenge rather than a personal offense or self-interest individual rights challenge;*
- **Step Three**: *Apply Torah to Frame a Workable Solution/Resolution/Remedy [personal conciliation attempt first; Beit Din a last resort]*
- **Step Four**: *Forgive any wrongs done to you or yours, and Bless all those who might have been thought of as wrongdoers in the situation; and*
- **Step Five**: *Act Like an Overcomer, by Moving On and never breathing another negative word about the situation or any of the people, institutions, or organizations involved.*

OR

Would you rather keep following the fruit of the tree of knowledge approach to life's challenges, namely:

- **Step One**: *Assess through a self-interest, personal offense lens, with Critical Eyes who just want to know 'Who is at Fault?'*
- **Step Two**: *Accuse/Assess and Publicize Blame*
- **Step Three**: *Frame a Public Narrative of 'Alternative Facts' that Dehumanizes your 'enemy',*
- **Step Four**: *Complain, Wallow, and 'Fret Over Evildoers'*
- **Step Five**: *Express Moral Outrage in Public Rants in an attempt to sway public opinion a. against your 'enemy', and b. to sympathize with your 'cause',*
and
- **Step Six**: *Keep Playing the Victim, and Dehumanizing, Mocking, and Punishing everyone that the narrative you have contrived defines as a wrongdoer.*

The third question that each hypothetical throws at us should cause us to consider is:

*Just How Close To – And How Much Like – the Bridegroom-King
Do You Really Want to Become?*

You might want to pause a few moments before you move on, bow your head, and give some consideration to those questions.

What Would – and Will - Messiah Do?

When the Messiah establishes His Throne, and sits to judge, we know that He will not judge *by the sight of His eyes* or decide controversies by *the hearing of His ears*, but *‘with righteousness He will determine what is needed, and He will decree justice for the poor’*. **Isaiah 11:4; Micah 4:3**. That should bring us right back to parsha *Mishpatim*. Look beyond the institutional theologies which hate these pronouncements, and which therefore declare them *‘superseded laws’*, and you will see it. The Sinaitic *mishpatim* are given to us as nothing short of *a foretaste of the kinds of rulings Messiah will make during His Millennial Reign*. They constitute examples given in advance of the application of Divine Wisdom with the perfect measure of Divine Compassion. Learn to translate *mishpatim*, therefore, simply as *‘what Messiah would – and will - do’*⁵.

Do you want to get to know Messiah, Dear Reader? Believe it or not, getting to know Messiah is what the *mishpatim* discourse of Torah is all about. So study all the *mishpatim* carefully. Apply them to your life at every level you can possibly think of. Get familiar with both *the spirit* and *the letter* of each *mishpat*. Ask the Holy One to reveal the spiritual realities inherent in each of them. And in so doing you will be trained *to think the way Messiah thinks*. Through internalizing the *mishpatim* you will learn how He balances out the attributes of *wisdom* on the one hand with the perfect blend of *retribution, corrective discipline, covenant faithfulness, and compassion* on the other - in every situation and circumstance the *mishpatim* discourse describes.

Through this process the Holy One will teach us how *to instinctively approach situations and circumstances and people like your Covenant Partner in Heaven does*. This is the method He has chosen to train us to *move in rhythm with Him*. This is the technique He has instituted to coach us in the lifestyle of walking hand-in-Hand with Him, following His lead and drawing strength from Him, through every situation and circumstance in life. We are being trained to *follow the lead* of

⁵ Yeshua taught that He did not come to do away with the Torah, but to make it *full and meaningful, vibrant and alive and powerful* again. **Matthew 5:17-19**.

the Holy One much like the way like Ginger Rogers followed the lead of Fred Astaire. We are to learn to *move as one with Him*. When that happens, of course, with every movement we make, the only one the world will see will be *HIM*. And that is *the way it's supposed to be*. If the world ever sees and takes notice of us we are probably doing something very, very wrong – and getting ourselves in a world of trouble to boot.

If I Were A Rich Man ...

What protocols and redemptive strategies does the Holy One want us to use when *personal space* or *property interests* of persons within the Community of the Redeemed are violated? Contrary to popular opinion, the *Mishpatim Discourse* is not about judgment, retribution, vengeance, or ‘fitting punishment’. What it is about is *the renewing of our minds* – *i.e.* being reprogrammed by our Redeemer to always think in terms of *workable solutions to potentially disruptive and divisive problems of human interaction*. The Holy One is not teaching us laws of individual rights. What He is teaching us to flow naturally in the administration of His Grand Redemptive Plan. He is teaching us *the way His Brilliant Mind works and devises solutions to human problems while keeping the goal the advancement of the Kingdom, instead of letting the Kingdom Mission get derailed by either personal offenses or ideological agendas*. The Holy One did not bring us under His Chuppah to teach us concepts, principles, ideas, or doctrines – He brought us here to inspire and empower us to co-labor with Him in offering the world *practical, problem-solving solutions*. He is assuming for us the roles of Life coach, Mentor, and Rabbi. He is employing a hypothetical case approach to train us how to both *think and approach situations and challenges* the way He does. After all, how can we represent Him accurately to the world if we do not know His Priorities? How can we reveal to the world His goodness if we let ourselves get caught up in emotional over-reaction to every little unpleasant thing that happens? How can we teach the world what it means to *not be overcome by evil*, but to *overcome evil with good*, if we let things like anger and offense, vengeance and blame, control our approach to problems and provocations. The Holy One is training us to see life through a higher, more long-term, multi-generational lens. He is training us to access both Divine Wisdom and Divine Compassion – and to do so in real ways, in real time. He is using simple hypothetical situations that we will probably never face directly to do it. He doesn't want to arouse our fallen human pseudo-intellectual senses of ‘morality’ and ‘justice’; He wants to awaken something much more useful, which will have a much greater degree of Kingdom-advancing impact. Before He gets into the details of teaching us His Ways, He wants to reveal to us *His Heart and its beautiful priorities*.

Why is the Holy One teaching us to *think like Him* before controversies actually

arise? Because He understands that if all we know are His laws, and do not understand His Heart, His Goodness, His Wisdom, and His Priorities – well, if that is what happens after the great season of redemption and betrothal we have just experienced, a great opportunity will be missed, instead of becoming trustworthy brokers of healing, redemption, and restoration in the world, we will become just another bunch of toxic legalists. We will get all judgmental and religious. We will look down our noses at everyone around us. We will fixate on ‘*Who-is-to-blame-and-what-punishment-do-they-deserve?*’ instead of on ‘okay-this-isn’t-pleasant-but-how-do-we-fix-this. We will obsess over ‘*who-did-what-wrong?*’ instead of keeping our focus on ‘*How-does-the-Kingdom-move-forward-from-here?*’ If we do that, we will make a mess of everything and everyone we touch - instead of walking in and coloring our world with His Marvelous Light as our Great King calls us to do. If we let the ‘*bad things that happen to good people*’ we encounter distract us away doing what the King directs; and if we let our fallen fleshly appetite to declare people ‘evil’ or ‘good’ based on their worst episode of behavior, we will turn our houses and communities into soap operas, pity parties, and wrestling matches – and we will, in the process, make our Bridegroom-King’s Name a stench in the land. If we are to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, we simply HAVE to learn to recognize – and choose to subordinate to the Will of our Bridegroom-King – every hint of our *mama-bear*, *papa-bear* reflex, our *fight-or-flight* reflex, and our *see-and-immediately-judge* reflex.

A More Excellent Way

To kick off this section of the discourse the Holy One instructs us concerning how we are to deal with the problem of *personal injuries caused to one person by another person’s domestic animals*. Let’s say your German Shepherd attacks my beagle. Or my bull gores my neighbor’s cow. Or perhaps your daughter’s Mustang T-bones my son’s Jaguar. What do we do when such stuff happens? Should we challenge each other to a duel? Should we just file an insurance claim, and forget about it? Should we stomp our feet and yell out ‘*I’ll see you in court!*’, and then go hire the meanest lawyer we can find? The reactions I have listed are all ways the world around us handles such things, are they not?

The Holy One has a *better way* for His *am segulah*, His ‘*kingdom of priests*’, and His ‘*holy nation*’. Torah tells us, in the form of *mishpatim*, what Messiah would do. No complaining. No ranting. No fretting over evildoers. No accusing. No pistols. No adjusters. No lawyers. No whining. No courtroom necessary - just a little humility and a lot of *sh’ma*-ing. Here is how the Holy One instructed Moshe – and prophetically called forth righteousness from us in connection with our dealings with our property and the property of others.

Scenario #1: One's Person's Ox Destroys the Ox of Another

The first hypothetical situation the Holy One presents for our consideration in today's aliyah is that one person's ox gores or otherwise causes injury to another person's ox. It is a well-established fact of life that animals – especially males – are intensely territorial, protective, and aggressive. Let two full-grown males of any species get into proximity with each other and you will quickly see sparks start to fly. When the species is oxen, hooves, heads, and horns start flying as well. Horn rips through flesh, hits artery or pierces organ ... and soon only one ox remains. What should the redeemed community do, *to keep the Kingdom of Heaven's agenda advancing even in the face of this unpleasant situation?* How do we keep raw emotion, offense, and anger from causing a disruption of the unity of the camp? Here is what the Holy One told Moshe would be His way of dealing with the matter:

V'chi-yigof shor-ish et-shor rei'eihu v'met

If one person's ox injures the ox of another person, and it dies,

umachru et ha-shor hachai v'chatzu et-kaspo

they are to sell the live ox and divide the money received for it.

V'gam et ha-met y'chetzun

They are also to divide the dead animal.

[Exodus 21:35]

Wow! The two men do not have to hate each other. Their neighbors do not have to choose sides. Nobody has to march in the streets. There is no need for a reporter to be called to come out and do a story that will make one person look bad and the other one look good. We can just locate and crawl through the strait Psalm 1:1-2 gate, then walk the Proverbs 3:3-6 narrow pathway, avoid the minefield of human emotions, and get on with life.

Lesson #1: The Holy One is not concerned with who was 'right' and 'who was wrong'. Who is 'to blame' is simply never of importance to Him. Obsession over right and wrong, moral and immoral, fair and unfair, and good and evil is *mans' problem* – a disease we obtained through ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What the Holy One is concerned about is how to *make the best of a bad situation* – about how men can *overcome evil with good*. What happened in the past is never the Holy One's focus; His focus is always on building a better future. His focus is 'how all things – even bad situations such as his hypothetical presents – can be worked together for good for those who love Him and who are called according to His Purpose. See **Romans 8:28**. There is to be no human vengeance in the Kingdom. There is to be no retribution. There is to be no 'winner' and no 'loser'.

He's Hurt – BAD!

Imagine that you are sitting at home, meditating on the Torah, when you hear a strange sound. Are those a child's footsteps running up your walk? Before you know it, small fists are pounding on your door. A desperate voice cries out: "*Help! Come quickly! There has been an accident!*" You rush to the door and find a little girl, no more than four or five years old, in tears, trembling. She pleads: "*Please – help my daddy! He's hurt – BAD!*" You grab a jacket and first-aid kit, and off the two of you run - to who knows where, to find who knows what. As you rush with the brave little girl toward the scene of whatever disaster has rocked her world so thoroughly, you try to get some idea what has happened. She says she doesn't really know how to describe it. She was just out taking a walk with her father, she says, when they heard the thundering of hooves – and saw an ox, with a broken tether dangling from its neck, and blood dripping from its horns, running right toward them. Another ox lay lifeless on the ground in the area from which the charging ox came. It was obvious that the charging ox had gored the motionless one to death. The little girl's father had taken up a stance between the charging ox and his daughter. He told her to run for, and climb as high as she could in, the nearest tree. The last she saw before she turned to run, her father was waving his arms, 'getting large', and trying to calm the ox down. She heard him speak calmly to the ox. At that point she had actually thought he was going to be able to calm the raging beast down and return it to its pasture. As she continued to run for the safety of the nearest tree, just in case, however, she heard a rustling of hooves, followed by the sickening 'thud' of hard contact. She looked around to see her daddy lying on the ground, gasping for breath, writhing in pain – as the ox tossed its head, snorted, and walked away. She ran to her father. He gasped "*Sweetheart – go ... run to the nearest house ... you have to ... get help!*"

As you reach the crest of a hill, you see him, sprawled across the path. You rush to the place where he lays, and find him barely conscious. His pulse and breath sounds are diminished; he appears to be going into shock. A deep wound in his left side is oozing blood. His daughter is sobbing uncontrollably. His life – and with it, this little girl and her mother and siblings' future - hang in the balance. An entire sphere of influence – and for that matter, any number of bloodlines – are at risk of major upheaval. Will this man live – or will he die? Will he recover enough to walk, to work, to carry on a more or less normal life – or will he be forever maimed, disabled, invalid, or comatose? How will this affect his *family*, his *sphere of influence*, and his *bloodline*? And suddenly, your mind starts to wonder: "*Whose ox was it that did this, anyway?*" Ah, but if you are wise, and Torah is at work in you, you will quickly shake off the unproductive *blame-casting*, *fault-finding*, and *rush to judgment* impulses that you are feeling in the flesh, turn to Heaven, and ask the Holy One: *what are we supposed to do when bad things happen to good*

people? How can I help this family? That is what we are here for. Not fault-finding. Not blame-casting. Not rushing to judgment. Those things are for legal systems and secular governments to worry about. We are here for something much more important: we are here to facilitate solution, resolution, redemption, and restoration. In Hebrew, those four things are all summed up in one word: *tikkun*. You might translate that ‘repair’. Or more accurately, you could call it ‘soul, situation, body, family, and bloodline healing’.

What Can We As a Society Do to Facilitate Redemption and Restoration?

In the case of the ox gore hypothetical, the Holy One’s prescribed ‘work all things work together for good’ solution calls for

1. The live ox – the one who gored the other one to be sold, and the proceeds to be divided equally between the two men involved; and
2. The deceased ox to be butchered and its edible meat and hide to be evenly divided between the two families.

Thus both households share the burden of the difficult situation, but neither suffers disproportionately.

But the Holy One is not through with this hypothetical just yet. Next He shifts the ‘injury-causing ox’ fact situation a quarter turn by adding a ‘higher level of foreseeability’ factor – *i.e.* he postulates that perhaps the offending ox was well known by its owner to be easily triggered to super-aggressive and destructive behavior. In that slightly different fact situation, the Holy One prescribes a slightly different Romans 8:28 style approach:

O noda ki shor nagach hu mitmol shilshom

However, if the ox was known to be in the habit of goring on previous occasions,

V’lo yish’mereinu be’alav shalem

and its owner did not take precautions

y’shalem shor tachat ha-shor

then he must pay the dead ox’s full value

v’hamet yihyeh-lo

And the dead animal is to remain the property of [its owner].

[Exodus 21:35-36]

Note the difference in the result. Instead of the involved families sharing the burden – and any benefit - now the family whose ox died is fully compensated for the ox that family lost AND gets to keep and eat all the edible meat and hide of their dead ox. Why? Because for the good of the Community, persons who purchase or own oxen – or dogs, or bulls – who tend to be overly-aggressive and

destructive will be encouraged to take appropriate precautions. The situation will cause people who own animals to consider more than the pleasure –or profit – the animals can bring to them and their household. They will have to consider, as well, the potential negative impact their ownership of animals can have on other people. Lack of supervision over animals that are known to be overly aggressive will be deterred. This does not merely serve a purpose in connection with the two affected families; it serves a greater societal purpose.

Thinking ‘Outside the Ox’

As you read the Holy One’s instructions for such situations feel free of course to substitute any domestic animal or damage-causing item of property [car, for instance] for the word *shor* [‘ox’]. The Holy One is merely using the *example* of the *shor* [ox] to make His point. People in covenant with the Holy One – and with each other in Him – can do *tzedek* [*i.e.* what Messiah would do in the situation for the sake of returning the focus to the Kingdom Agenda] without a judge telling him/her to.

With all that in mind, let’s delve more deeply into the Holy One’s ‘ox gore’ hypothetical - and process the challenge to personal and societal shalom through the Kingdom’s wisdom, revelation, and understanding matrix instead of making things worse through the over-the-top flesh reactions, emotional responses, and pseudo-intellectual abstraction arsenal of folly common among the nations.

With Dominion Comes Responsibility

Our newly found freedom – that for which the Holy One redeemed us from bondage in Egypt – is not without its limitations. We are not islands unto ourselves. Our actions – and failures to act when action is appropriate - drastically affect the lives of other people. When that happens, there are CONSEQUENCES. The Holy One wants us to know – and live and behave in acknowledgement of the fact that – with blessing dominion over Creation comes RESPONSIBILITY. We are not just to ‘take dominion’ over the Holy One’s creation. We are to *sh’mar* it – that means we are to carefully tend, watch over, treasure, and *take responsibility for* every possession that passes through our hands. Every good and precious gift comes from above, from the Holy One. He decides to whom He will entrust worldly possessions – from oxen to Mustang GT’s. We are to be good stewards, and that means we are to be responsible with whatever he gives us. And we are to be just as careful regarding, and just as concerned about, the material items the Holy One has entrusted to our neighbor – or even our enemy – as we are with regard to those things He has entrusted to us.

Scenario #2: The Destruction of Another’s Income Source

The second hypothetical situation the Holy One presents in this aliyah is that one person causes damage to another person’s field – *i.e.* his income source. Here is the

first scenario:

Ki yav'er-ish sadeh o-cherem

If a person grazes a field or a vineyard,

V'shilach et-be'iroh uvi'er bis'deh

and lets his livestock loose so that it grazes in another person's field,

acher meytav sadeihu

he must make restitution with the best of his field

umeytav karmo y'shalem

and the best of his vineyard.

[Exodus 22:4]

In this scenario the Holy One's solution is to have the one whose animal destroyed another's growing crop give the damaged party 'the best' of the production of both his own field [*i.e.* his barley, wheat, and flax crop] and his vineyard for that year.

Next the Holy One again shifts the hypothetical fact situation a quarter turn. Now the damage to the neighbor's field is a fire started in weeds as opposed to a grazing animal allowed to run wild. In this slightly different fact situation, the Holy One describes His Romans 8:28 style approach as follows:

Ki-tetze esh umatze'ah kotzim

If fire gets out of control and spreads through weeds,

V'ne'echal gadish o ha-kamah o ha-sadeh

and [then] consumes bound or standing grain or a field,

shalem y'shalem ha-mave'ir et ha-b'erah

the one who started the fire must make restitution.

[Exodus 22:5]

What the Holy One Means When He says 'Lo tignev':

[You Will Not Steal]

Because He created man the Holy One is fully aware of the tendency of man to be fascinated with material things. Two of the general principles of holiness contained within the *Aserot HaDibrot* deal with the issue of this fascination. *Lo tignev* [*You will not steal ...* - Exodus 20:13], and *lo tachmod* [*You will not covet ...* - Exodus 20:14]. First is the prophetic announcement by our Covenant Partner in Heaven that His people - those He sets apart unto Himself - 'lo tig'nev' - do not "steal". **Exodus 20:13**. The word our English Bibles translate as "steal" is the Hebrew word made up of the consonants *tav*, *gimel*, *nun*, and *beit*. It is derived from *ganav*. This is a primitive verb, which like all primitive Hebrew verb roots presents a picture - like a hieroglyphic. The specific picture the letters of this word presents is the stealthy/hidden entrance of a man into a house - like a thief in the night. Yeshua used this word picture very effectively in John 10. He there stated: ***The man who***

does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.” John 10:1. It is of this man (or this group of men), not HaSatan, but post-Maccabean High Priests and other religious leaders who did not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but obtained their leadership positions by deception and payoffs to the Roman government, that the Master said in the same paragraph: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”* John 10:10a.

Stop, Thief!

The Hebrew phrase ‘*Lo Tignov*’, found in Exodus 20:13 is traditionally translated [in King James English] as ‘*Thou shalt not steal*’. In the opening verses of today’s aliyah the Holy One spells out some of what that means.

Ki yignov-ish shor o-seh utvacho o mecharo

If a man steals an ox or sheep and then slaughters or sells it,

chamishah vakar y’shalem tachat ha-shor v’arba-tzon tachat ha-seh

he must repay five oxen for each ox, and four sheep for each sheep.

To steal [Hebrew *ganav*] is to take unauthorized possession of, or make unauthorized use or disposition of, something the Holy One has entrusted to someone else’s care. It is not just an offense against man – it is *a rebellion against the Holy One*. It is declaring the Holy One’s choice of who to entrust material things to unacceptable. It is to declare human desires more important than the Holy One’s will. The ‘mind of Messiah’ has a way of redemption for one who does such a thing – and for one who is damaged by such a thing. The Holy One says that if a man is found *by judges, upon credible testimony of two or more witnesses*, to have stolen and slaughters or sells a neighbor’s ox, so that he cannot return it, the thief is to be required by the community *to give the neighbor five oxen [or pay him their equivalent value]*. The thief’s hands are not to be cut off. He is not to be placed in prison. He is, instead, to be taught exactly what it feels like to have something the Holy One entrusted to him taken away – the way he took away that which the Holy One had entrusted to his victim, only multiplied by 5 times. If he took a sheep or goat, he must give back 4 times the value of what he stole. Now, what about people who *break and enter* someone else’s dwelling and take what the Holy One has entrusted to them? First of all, what if he is *caught in the act*? Torah tells us:

Im-bamachteret yimatze ha-ganav

If a burglar is caught in the act of breaking in,

V’hukah v’met eyn lo damim

and is struck and killed, it is not to be considered an act of murder.

Im-zarechah ha-shemesh alav damim lo

However, if he robs in broad daylight, then it is an act of murder [to kill him].

It is now time for another *what if*. *What if* the thief is not caught until after he has made away with the stolen goods? What would Messiah do then? Torah says:

shalem y'shalem im-eyn
[A thief] must make full restitution.

lo v'nimkar b'g'nevato
If he cannot pay, sell him as a slave [to make restitution] for his theft.
[Exodus 21:37 – 22:2]

Who is to enforce these wise judgments? Is it to be done by the victim, or by the victim's family and friends? Neither. Taking matters into one's own hands, and inflicting personal payback, is totally inconsistent the Holy One's Kingdom. Personal vengeance and private vendettas are the way of fallen man under the influence of the Serpent; they are not the way of the Bridegroom-King. The wisdom of the Creator of Heaven and Earth proclaims that any consequence of one's actions must be administered an impartial, equitable network of judges, after a full and fair hearing of all sides. Hence the Holy One explained to Moshe:

Al-kol-dvar-pesha al-shor al-chamor al-seh
Whenever an allegation of dishonesty is made, whether involving an ox, a donkey, a sheep,

al-salmah al-kol-aveidah asher yomar
a garment, or anything else that was reported missing,

ki-hu zeh ad ha-Elohim yavo dvar-sh'neyhem
[witnesses] are to testify of what they saw,
and the positions of the adversaries must be brought to the courts.

asher yarshi'un Elohim yeshalem sh'nayim l're'eihu
The person whom the courts declare guilty must then make double restitution to the other.
[Exodus 22:9]

What the Holy One Means When He says 'Lo tachmod':
[You Will Not Covet . . .]

The *Aseret HaDibrot* also contains the Holy One's pronouncement that His people do not "covet". The word our English Bibles translate as "covet" is the Hebrew word made up of the consonants *chet*, *mem*, and *dalet* [Strong's Hebrew word #2530, transliterated in its *pa'al* form as *chamad*, and pronounced *khaw-mad'*]. This is a primitive verb root, drawing *a picture of someone standing behind his own window sending out a wave of water that will break into someone else's door*. The picture depicts the mental/emotional state of the one standing behind his own window, strongly desiring to enter the other's door and sweep away what lies within. This is obviously the picture Yeshua was projecting when He looked inside the heart of the priests and religious leaders of the day - who had climbed into the sheep pen through means other than the gate [like a thief in the night]. He described for us their motivation, saying: ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."*** John 10:10a. The King James translators rendered the word *chamad* variously, in its 21 appearances in the Hebrew text, as to *desire*, to *covet*, to *delight*, to *lust*, to *take*

pleasure in something's beauty, to consider something delectable. It is a form of this word which Torah uses to describe what Chava [Eve] felt concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil after she had listened to the Serpent's lie. She considered the fruit "desirable" [*chamad*] for making her wise. **Genesis 3:6.**

The reality that we desperately need to grasp is that the Holy One has given material possessions and relationships to each man according to His will. Each man's home, relationships, and material possessions are the trees of his own *gan* [garden] of intimacy with the Holy One. We should be content with what we have, because the Holy One always provides more than we need. Similarly, each *other man* on the face of the earth is entitled to have *his* own *gan* without *our* interference. Separation from the *pane-al panei* [face to Face] relationship we are designed to have with the Holy One leads, however, to *chamad* [desiring, seeing as pleasurable for us what the Holy One has intended for the pleasure of someone else], and, if the *chamad* impulse is not curbed, it leads to *ganav* [appropriating to ourselves what the Holy One has entrusted to someone else].

Today's aliyah contains numerous specific instructions designed to purge the tendency toward *chamad* and *ganav* from His Betrothed. As we, the Bride-to-be of the Holy One, study and meditate upon these specific instructions, and their implications and applications, and gradually come to better understand, and apply in our own lives, the underlying truths, we will come through the gate of the sheep pen where we belong. His sheep *sh'ma* His Voice. The voice of another they will not *sh'ma*.

Coveting Inappropriate Intimacy

One of the most powerful drives with which the Holy One created man is the drive to procreate – i.e. to *produce offspring*. A necessary corollary to this drive is the drive to engage in procreative activity with a member of the opposite sex. There is nothing 'wrong' with this drive. But there is something very dangerous and destructive about letting it get out of control. Sometimes however men – and women for that matter – do not handle this drive well, and let the drive control and manipulate them instead of controlling the drive and channeling it into that which is *tov* [good]. When this happens, the lives of the individuals – and their families – are *altered forever*.

The Holy One knew before He created mankind as male and female that sometimes misuse of procreative urges, organs, and energy would occur. And so, He tells us what He thinks of the matter, through *mishpatim*.

Vechi-yefateh ish betulah asher lo-orasah

"If a man entices⁶ a virgin who is not betrothed⁷,

v'shachav imah mahor yimeharenah lo l'ishah

and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride price for her to be his wife.

Im-ma'en yema'en aviha letitah lo

If her father utterly refuses to give her to him,

keseף yish'kol kemohar ha-betulot

he is to pay money according to the bride price of virgins.

[Exodus 22:15-16]

The word our English Bibles translate as 'virgin' in this passage is *betulah* [plural form, *betulot*]. This is usually understood to mean a woman who has never before been sexually active. Other names by which young women might be called are *na'arah* [i.e. a young girl, not specific as to virginity] and *almah* [i.e. a maiden, also not specific as to virginity]⁸. In the Holy One's way of thinking, as revealed in Torah, a young woman was expected to remain a *betulah* [i.e. a chaste virgin] until her wedding, and if she was discovered on the wedding night not to be a *betulah*, the marriage agreement could be voided.

The standard 'bride price' for virgins, the sages tell us, is 50 shekels. **Ketuvot 10a, 39b; Deuteronomy 22:29**. This was intended to be approximately the amount of money it would take for an ordinary person to live for a year. **Peah 8:8**.

You will note that the Holy One places the responsibility and penalty for premarital/extramarital relations between a man and a woman squarely on the shoulders of *the man*. The girl/woman will have personal, spiritual, and familial consequences with which she will have to deal, but the Holy One makes it clear that the man is the one who is to take the initiative in 'righting' – as far as possible - the spiritual and moral wrong that has been done. The man is no less culpable in the Holy One's eyes than a thief or a robber. He is to take the initiative in approaching the deflowered girl/woman's father – who is likely not going to be particularly friendly under the circumstances – and to offer to marry her [much as Shechem sought to negotiate marriage with Ya'akov's daughter Dinah after despoiling her]. Even if her father refuses, he is to pay the 'bride price' – approximately a year's

⁶ For a man to entice a maiden is for him to persuade her both to yield to his will and consent to be used by him to satisfy his physical desire. It involves emotional, physical, and spiritual dynamics.

⁷ According to Deuteronomy 22:23, seducing a girl betrothed to another is, like seducing another man's wife, something The Holy One's wisdom says is punishable by death.

⁸ In the well known 'a virgin [KJV] shall conceive, and shall give birth to a son ...' passage [Isaiah 7:14], the Hebrew word translated as 'virgin' is not *betulah*, but *almah* [merely meaning 'maiden' as opposed to a maiden who is a *betulah* or true virgin. This has generated significant controversy over whether the prophetic message was, or was not, intended to be of a 'virgin birth' in the sense Christian theologians not versed in Hebrew have argued.

wages – as restitution.

The High Price of Reckless, UnSurrendered Passion

Passion has a price. Irresponsible pursuit of passion is, in the Holy One's kingdom, expected to be *extremely expensive*. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - you to face the issue of your sexuality head on. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - you to understand and submit to His Lordship the hormones and emotions which He placed within you for a later day and a different circumstance. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - you to resolve, early on, to place reasonable limits on every physical and emotional and social urge associated with your maleness or femaleness. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - you to realize the effects of your behavior on others around you, and to behave responsibly in light of the potential harm a mistake on your part could cause. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - you to abstain from wearing revealing or sexually suggestive clothing - whatever the rest of the world may be wearing.

The Holy One expects us to abstain from sexually oriented conversations – whatever the rest of the world may be talking about. The Holy One expects – and completely empowers - us to abstain from sexually oriented entertainment – whatever movies, television shows, web pages and music videos the rest of the world is raving about. And the Holy One expects - and completely empowers - us to look at all His other human creations – including attractive persons of the opposite gender – through His eyes of compassion and concern, as *precious daughters or sons of the most High God, with marvelous God-ordained destinies to fulfill*, instead of as objects for the fulfillment of our romantic fantasies and/or animalistic urges.

The Protected Classes of the Holy One's Kingdom

In The Holy One's kingdom there are 'protected classes' – categories of people who are especially vulnerable to oppression and mistreatment. The classes of people the Holy One watches over – and wants us to watch over - with the highest level of concern and protectiveness possible are:

1. The 'Foreigner'
2. The widow,
3. The Fatherless, and
4. The Poor

The well being of every individual within these protected classes is watched over most jealously by the Holy One. The Holy One wants to train us, His people, to *jealously watch over the individuals that we know who are within these classes of people* as well – with the same selfless passion He feels. If therefore a person

fitting within one of these classifications comes into your or my sphere of influence, we had better *be on heightened alert* for messages from His Throne as to what we are supposed to do.

Here are the first things the Holy One told Moshe to say to us about such people:

V'ger lo-toneh v'lo tilchatzeinu

"You are to neither mistreat a foreigner nor oppress him,

ki-gerim heyitem b'erezt Mitzrayim

for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Kol-almanah v'yatom lo te'anun

You are not to afflict any widow or fatherless child.

Im-aneh te'aneh oto ki im-tza'ok yitz'ak elay

If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me,

shamoa eshma tza'akato

I will surely hear their cry;

V'charah api v'haragti etchem

and My wrath will become hot,

b'charev v'hayu neshechem almanot uvneichem yetomim

and I will kill you with the sword, making your wives widows, and your children fatherless.

[Exodus 22:20-23]

Im-kesef talveh et-ami et-he'ani imach

When you lend money to My people, to the poor man among you,

lo-tihyeh lo kenoshe lo-tesimun alav neshech

do not press him for repayment. [Also] do not take interest from him.

[Exodus 22:24]

We have been *forewarned*. I hope you caught that part about how the Holy One's '*wrath will become hot*', and the part that followed about Him sending a sword, and making widows of our wives and orphans of our children. The point is, if you want to see the Holy One get *really angry*, or if you have a *death wish* - just oppress a foreigner, or mistreat a widow, or pick on an orphan, or give a truly poor person a hard time. If you - or I - 'mess' with any of four classes of people, the Holy One will return the oppression or mistreatment *on your - or my - head*. And He will do it *with a vengeance*. The Holy One wants there to be no question in your mind - or mine - where He stands. If, therefore, even one of His covenant people departs so much from the covenant that he oppresses a foreigner, widow, or orphan, the Holy One actually vows to '*kill [that man] with the sword*', to *make his wife a widow*, and to *make his children know what it is like to be fatherless*. Wow - *whatever we sow* in relation to these four classes of people when they cross our paths *our families will reap*. Once a foreigner, a widow, an orphan, or a poor

person comes across our radar screen, our attitude and our ways of approaching life *had better change*. All the powers of spiritual observation the Holy One with which the Holy One has endowed us, as well as all the compassions He has loosed in us, had better be instantly aroused. And we should immediately ask the Holy One to reveal to us what, exactly, He wants us to do – and not do - with regard to this special person, as well as the *when and the how* of what He considers appropriate.

If we blow this particular trust, the consequences *are never going to be good*. There will always be serious consequences if we refuse to inquire and jump on board with whatever the Father is doing in the life of the destitute and the fatherless and the widows and the displaced foreigners He brings across our paths. What we must not try to do, of course, is become any other person's 'savior'. We are not to go all 'mama bear' or 'papa bear' on anyone. The Holy One is more than capable of doing the rescue and deliverance thing without all our emotional and ideological baggage. So what are we to do? We are merely to *sh'ma* the Holy One carefully, try to see what He is in the process of doing with respect to the person's life, and let the Holy One do it – using our time and assets and energy if He so instructs - while we remain as invisible as possible in the whole process⁹.

Now that we have come to the realization of how deeply committed the Holy One is to the foreigner, the widow, the orphan, and the poor in our midst, Beloved, think how 'out of rhythm' with Him we would have to be to oppress or mistreat such a person. Think how far from The Holy One, and our new creation identity, we would have to have strayed. Think how horribly apostate and perverse our thinking would have had to have become. In light of these things, is His decree of death [physical death – not necessarily including condemnation to eternal damnation] a surprise? For the sake of the welfare of the Community and the world, should we not be 'cut off'? Of course we should. That is spiritual reality. It is sobering. What are we to make of it? For one thing, we are to realize that a lack of concern for and sensitivity to the plight of the foreigner, the widow, the orphan, and the poor in our midst is *an early warning sign of spiritual disease*. Check your spiritual pulse. Take your *spiritual temperature right now*. Ask yourself these questions:

⁹ Reflect on the accounts of the life of Yeshua. Did He have a 'foreigner' in His life? I can think of a few. First was the Roman Centurion of Matthew 8:4-13. Second 'Syro-Phoenician woman' of Matthew 15:21-28. Third was the 'woman at the well' from Samaria. Look at how Yeshua interacted with these people, Beloved, and you will get an idea how the Holy One expects us to think about 'foreigners'. Yeshua likewise had a *widow* in His life [see **Luke 21:2**], and understood and taught us what to do with orphans. See John 14:18: ***I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you***. Yeshua also dealt bountifully with *the poor*. See **Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:5**.

1. Do you still see the Holy One's special protected classes through *the Holy One's eyes of love and compassion*?
2. Or has your heart grown cold toward such people, such that you see them through selfish eyes of *superiority, suspicion, and condescension*?

It *matters*. It matters *a lot*. It is the blood pressure check of spiritual wellness.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Certain specific instructions are given in today's aliyah regarding damages/injuries resulting from property ownership.

[A] If a person from the covenant community owns livestock that causes personal injury to another person, what is the Holy One's ordinance as to the proper resolution of the problem?

[B] What factor will affect the proper resolution?

[C] If a man is caught after violating the commandment not to steal with regard to another man's livestock, what penalty does he pay?

[D] If a man is caught in the act of breaking and entering to steal, what things might happen to him under what circumstances?

[E] If a person from the covenant community owns livestock that causes property damage to another person, what is the Holy One's ordinance as to the proper resolution of the problem?

[F] If a person causes a fire that damages a field of a neighbor, what is the Holy One's ordinance as to the proper resolution of the problem?

[G] From the *mishpatim* referenced above, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and important?

2. In 22:7-15 the Holy One deals with what is called "bailments", when one person entrusts property to another for safekeeping, or if he loans or rents property to another.

***If a man delivers to his neighbor money or stuff to keep,
and it is stolen out of the man's house; if the thief is found, he shall pay double.
If the thief isn't found, then the master of the house is to come near to the Holy One
to find out if he hasn't put his hand to his neighbor's goods.***

***For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for donkey,
for sheep, for clothing, or for any kind of lost thing, whereof one says, 'This is mine,'
the causes of both parties are to come before the Holy One.
He whom the Holy One condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.***

***If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep,
or any animal to keep, and it dies or is injured, or driven away, no man seeing it;
the oath of the Holy One is to be between them both,
whether he hasn't put his hand to his neighbor's goods;
and the owner of it is to accept it, and he is not to make restitution.***

But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it.

*If it is torn in pieces, let him bring it for evidence.
He shall not make good that which was torn.*

*If a man borrows anything of his neighbor's,
and it is injured, or dies, the owner of it not being with it, he shall surely make restitution.
If the owner of it is with it, he shall not make it good.
If it is a leased thing, it came for its lease.*

[A] What is the proper resolution of a case when loaned or “bailed” property is lost, stolen, or damaged? What factors affect this kind of case?

[B] From the *mishpatim* referenced above regarding loaned or bailed property, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and important?

3. In 22:16-17 the Holy One spells out the proper resolution of a case where a man or boy seduces a girl to engage in sexual activity outside the context of marriage.

*If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married, and lies with her,
he is to surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses
to give her to him, he is to pay money according to the dowry of virgins.*

[A] What are the only two possible consequences the Holy One allows?

[B] What determines which of these consequences is appropriate?

[C] What would be the punishment of the boy or man if the girl had been betrothed? What passage of Torah spells this out?

[D] From the *mishpatim* referenced above regarding sexual conduct outside marriage, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and important?

4. In Exodus 22:18-24 the Holy One spells out certain actions which will warrant the imposition of death upon the one guilty.

You are not to allow a sorceress to live.

Whoever has intimate relations with an animal is surely to be put to death.

He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Holy One only, is to be utterly destroyed.

*You are not to wrong a foreigner, neither are you to oppress him,
for you were foreigners in the land of Mitzrayim.*

You are not to take advantage of any widow or fatherless child.

*If you take advantage of them at all, and they cry at all to me,
I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will grow hot, and I will kill you with the sword;
and your wives will be widows, and your children fatherless.*

[A] What actions warrant the imposition of death?

[B] Who is to be the enforcer of the death sentence?

[C] From the *mishpatim* referenced above regarding persons who are an abomination or a danger to society, whose sins cannot be forgiven, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and

important?

5. In Exodus 22:25-27 the Holy One spells out certain protections for the poor against people who act like they want to help but who really want to take advantage of the poor man's poverty.

*If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor,
you are not to be to him as a creditor, neither are you to charge him interest.*

*If you take your neighbor's garment as collateral,
you are to restore it to him before the sun goes down,
for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What would he sleep in?
It will happen, when he cries to me, that I will hear, for I am gracious.*

[A] Why do you think the Holy One prohibits taking interest on a loan to a poor person?

[B] Why do you think the Holy One prohibits the use of a poor person's garment overnight?

[C] From the *mishpatim* referenced above regarding business dealings with poor people, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and important?

6. The Holy One concludes today's aliyah with teachings having more to do with a person's relationship with the Holy One than his relation to his fellow man.

No one is to blaspheme Elohim, nor curse a nasi [ruler] of your people.

You are not to delay offering from your harvest and from the outflow of your presses.

Give the firstborn of your sons to me. Do likewise with your oxen and with your sheep.

Let them stay seven with the mother, then on the eighth day give it to Me.

*You are men set apart to, for, and unto Me,
therefore you are not to eat any flesh that is torn by animals in the field. Cast it to the dogs."*

[A] List the subjects contained in verses 28-31.

[B] With regard to each ordinance, state which of the ten "commandments" the ordinance is most closely related to.

[C] From the *mishpatim* referenced above regarding our covenant responsibilities to the Holy One, what have you learned about the Holy One, His Ways, and what He considers valuable and important?

7. In today's haftarah aliyah from Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] we read:

Thus says the Holy One the God of Yisra'el: I made a covenant with your fathers

*in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Mitzrayim,
out of the house of bondage, saying,*

*At the end of seven years you are to let go every man his brother
who is a Hebrew, who has been sold to you, and has served you six years,*

*you are to let him go free from you:
but your fathers didn't listen to me, neither inclined their ear.*

*You were now turned, and had done that which is right in my eyes,
in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor;
and you had made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my Name:
but you turned and profaned my name,
and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid,
whom you had let go free at their pleasure, to return;
and you brought them into subjection, to be to you for servants and for handmaids.*

*Therefore thus says the Holy One: you have not listened to me,
to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbor:
behold, I proclaim to you a liberty, says the Holy One,
to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine;
and I will make you to be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the eretz.*

[A] What had the leaders of Y'hudah [Judah] done in violation of Torah?

[B] What about this sin do you think was so serious?

[C] Which of the ten “commandments”, if any, had the leaders broken - at least in spirit?

[D] List the judgments the Holy One loosed against the leaders of Y'hudah in consequence of this sin.

8. In today's B'rit Chadasha aliyah *Shaul of Tarsus* [the apostle Paul] describes the lifestyle he had experienced after his call as the Holy One's messenger to the *goyim* [gentile nations into which the Holy One had dispersed the “lost” tribes of Israel].

*We give no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our service may not be blamed,
but in everything commending ourselves, as servants of God,
in great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,
in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors,
in watchings, in fastings; in pureness,
in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Ruach HaKodesh, in sincere love,
in the word of truth, in the power of God;
by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,
by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report;
as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known;
as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and not killed;
as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

[2Corinthians 6:3-10]

[A] What was Shaul's first priority and foremost goal?

[B] List the conditions under which Shaul functioned [verses 4-5, 7-10].

[C] How did Shaul react to the following:

[i] grief and mourning;

[ii] being poor;

[iii] having no earthly possessions.

[D] According to verses 6-7, what characteristics and grace gifts did the Holy One give Shaul in order to equip him to fulfill his purpose and destiny?

*May the garden of intimacy the Holy One has designed and provided for you
so fascinate and enthrall you
that you will not look upon that of your neighbor's with either envy or curiosity.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:17-24

*Do good to your servant.
I will live and I will sh'ma your word.
Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your Torah.
I am a stranger on the eretz - don't hide your mitzvot from me.
My soul is consumed with longing for your mishpatim at all times.
You have rebuked the proud who are cursed,
who wander from your mitzvot.
Take reproach and contempt away from me,
for I have kept your statutes.
Though princes sit and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
Indeed your statutes are my delight and my counselors.*