

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS:	<i>Torah B'chukotai:</i>	Leviticus 27:3-8
	<i>Haftarah:</i>	Jeremiah 17:5-8
	<i>B'rit Chadasha:</i>	John 14:19-20

If he is too poor to pay the prescribed valuation, then he is to present himself before the priest, and the priest is to set a value for him . . .

[Leviticus 27:8]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 68:22-35;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* [the Petition for Redemption]

V'hayah erkeicha ha-zachar miben esrim shanah v'ad ben-shishim shanah v'hayah erkeicha chamishim shekel kesef – *And the redemption fee to be paid to redeem a man between 40 and 60 years old is 50 shekels of silver ...* **Leviticus 27:3a.**

The greatest continuous download of Divine Wisdom the world has ever known is in full swing. Our Bridegroom-King has been sowing the powerful seed of His Word into the good soil of our redeemed hearts for almost 11 months now. His mission at Mount Sinai is to make us over – into a fitting helpmeet. He is doing it from the inside to the outside. He is awakening our hearts. He is renewing of our minds. He is deprogramming and reprogramming our matrix of likes, dislikes and delights. He is upgrading our capacities of vision – expanding our horizons, and augmenting and purifying our perspective. He is enhancing our capacities to listen, to hear – and to discern, parse, retain and incorporate into our lives the glorious new things we are hearing. He is empowering us fresh, new, powerful vocabulary – and giving us a powerful, beautiful, joyful new story to tell. He is slowly, gently, lovingly, but relentlessly making us *holy as He is holy*. He is teaching us how to receive from Him, treasure and cherish, continually walk in, and function as *asah*-ers and dispensers of *shalom*. He is training us to receive and reflect Divine sparks of light. He is modeling for us how to forgive human beings quickly and joyfully for what we once would have thought were unpardonable sins. He is training us to go forth into the world and love our neighbor as and to the extent that we ourselves have been and are constantly being loved by the Greatest Lover of All Time – i.e. He Himself.

As a result of the Great Sinaitic Download we have been marked forever as *His private garden*. He tilled the fallow soil of our Hebrew souls with the stunning miracles, signs, and wonders He performed for us as He was leading us from

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bondage. He imprinted the Passover story into our DNA in indelible ink. He led us to Sinai personally, in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. and an outstretched is preparing us – individually and collectively – to live, to thrive, and to produce generation after generation of spiritual fruit in the world. He has promised to make those of us who *sh'ma* His Voice and *sh'mar* His Covenant into His *special treasure people*, His *royal ambassadors/courtiers of His kingdom*, and His *set-apart nation*. He knows what set of circumstances it will take for each of us to sprout, to form a root system, to send forth branches, to produce leaves that testify of the new species of which we are apart, to burst into fragrant bloom, and to bear fruit. He has written all our days in a Book. He knows when, and how, and why, each of us will sometimes falter, other times fail – and therefore need atonement. He has covered that need as well. He has prepared us to overcome every situation, to receive and dispense new mercies every morning, and to add a new chapter to His story every day.

Resuming the Redemption Discourse

The aliyah we will study today has to do with promises/vows our Bridegroom-King knows that some of us will make – whether in the heat of passion or in throes of pride – and which we will then, predictably, be unable to keep. The Holy One never instructed us to make a promise or vow – that is solely our doing. But promises/vows tend to become an aspect of life in most cultures. Do you want to buy a house? Unless you have the purchase price in cash just lying around, you will have to take out a loan – and part of that loan will be a promise/vow to pay back what you have borrowed. Do you want to rent a car or an apartment? It will involve papers, promises, and signatures. For convenience in financial transactions do you ever use a credit or debit card, or write personal checks? Every time you do so you are making a promise/vow to pay. And since you do not control the future, you are speaking presumptuously. Do you tell your parents you will be home by 10:00? Do you tell your spouse you will pick up the dry cleaning? Do you tell your son you will take him to the ballgame? Do you tell your mother you will call her? Do you tell your friend you will keep his/her secret? I could, of course, go on *ad infinitum*. Promise/vows are never required by the Holy One. But they seem to roll off the human tongue very, very easily, don't they.

All of the verses we read today are spoken in the Divine Voice. These are not Moshe's words – they are the words of the Holy One Himself. The opening verses of our aliyah reads as follows:

If your vow was to dedicate a male from 20 years old up to 60 years old, then your redemption sum will be 50 shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. If your vow was to dedicate a female [in that age group], then your redemption price will be 30 shekels.

Wait a minute! Someone made a vow to dedicate a human being? Who *are* these people – and what were they thinking? Why would a man make a vow of dedication? How can a man make a vow of dedication over either himself or *another human being*? Isn't that being a bit irreverent and presumptuous?

And since we all know there is no provision for human sacrifice in the Torah, to what or for what, pray tell, is the person in question being dedicated? What on earth were we doing dedicating a human life - either our own or another's - in the first place? We do not control the future – so why do we so often speak and act and make promises like we can?

Alas, this is the problem. It is all too common. Every day it seems we commit ourselves – and other people - to be at certain places. We commit ourselves and other people to do – and/or refrain from doing – specific things. We place burdens far in excess of the light yoke of Torah upon our own shoulders – and upon the shoulders of others. It may be about wanting to 'do the work of the Lord'; or it may be all about us - about our fleshly desire to be 'in control'.

Getting Real

Let's say the promise/vow was about ourselves. What specific kind of promise/vow is the Holy One talking about? Is He talking about a person making a commitment to serve at the *Mish'kan* at a particular time? Is He talking about a person making something like a Nazarite vow? Is He talking about a vow to abstain from certain substances, activities, or behaviors? The Holy One is very vague in this regard. The scope of 'vow of dedication' is thus very, very broad. Let's talk about one kind of vow of dedication with which many of us may be familiar. Have you ever heard people in certain religious circles '*rededicate their life*' to the Holy One? It is not uncommon to hear of that. But what exactly does that mean? Does the Holy One ever require – even suggest it? Isn't the commitment our ancestors made at Sinai [i.e. *na'aseh v'nish'ma* commitment found in Exodus 24:7] enough? What words, what promises, what specific actions, does He call for? How long is it supposed to last? If you have ever 'rededicated your life' to the Holy One, Dear One, you know what happens, don't you? It all starts with you feeling sorrow over your sins and/or guilt over your lapses in discipline. You shed a few tears. You feel better. But then comes the next day. You have to face and deal with the same old temptations – and perhaps a few new ones. You find yourself confronted by irritations, aggravations and pet peeves. You get distracted. You get busy. You get tired. Stuff comes up. Your day goes south. You lose your peace. You lose your joy. You lose your temper. You lose your purity. And that 'rededication' thing? Well, perhaps one day you will repeat the whole process again

Not to worry. The Holy One wants you to take your words seriously, of course. He knows that fall-out – from the people in your social circle – will flow from the breaking of your vow of dedication/rededication. But He knew exactly what He was dealing with before He cut covenant with you. He knew your weaknesses. He does not want you to think for a moment that this takes you beyond the point of redemption with Him. He names the price: fifty shekels if you are a man; thirty if you are a woman. And if you can't afford that, the *kohen* will set a price you can afford. According to the Talmud, the *kohen* would do this by taking into consideration how much the person who would be paying the redemption price owned, discounted by whatever amount he would need to retain to cover his basic life necessities like a place to stay, a bed, a pillow, a chair/seat, and the tools he needs for his trade or skill. **Arachin 23b**

With the Holy One, every situation is always about *redemption* – not about condemnation. It is always about *what we need to do to fix this* – instead of how bad a mess we got ourself in.

The Numerology of the Shekels

In Biblical times a *talent of silver* represented approximately two years wages for a common laborer. There are 3000 shekels in a talent. Fifteen hundred shekels represented one year's wages for a common laborer. Fifty shekels thus represented a little less than two weeks' wages for a common laborer. That is not much in the great scheme of things. The price of redemption is definitely right. Whether the man in question was a scholar, a tradesman, a beggar, or a slave, the price of redemption was the same. No matter what his health or wealth, the price of redemption was the same. No matter what his size or talent, work ethic or contribution to the community, the price of redemption remained the same. The Holy One is no respecter of persons, you see **Acts 10:34**. And He does not intend for us ever to be respecters of persons either. See **Deuteronomy 10:17 & 16:19; Job 34:21; and James 2:1**.

Dedication of/Vows Made By or Concerning Men or Women of Working/Parenting Age

Why did the Holy One set the price of redemption of a man of working age from a vow of consecration he could not fulfill at fifty shekels instead of at some other number? We are not specifically told of the Bridegroom-King's reasoning, of course. But perhaps it is because the Hebrew letter that has the numerical value of fifty is the *nun*. The pictograph associated with the *nun* is that of a son or heir. The son/heir is the price. And the debt is 'paid in full'.

Thirty shekels for the redemption of a woman from a vow of consecration she cannot fulfill? Why thirty? Again we are not told. But perhaps it is because the

Hebrew letter that has the numerical value of thirty is the *lamed*. The pictograph associated with the *lamed* is the goad or tongue – that which gives direction and instruction.

Dedication of Vows Made By or Concerning Children of Different Ages

If the vow of consecration relates to *a child between the ages of 5 and 20 years*, the Holy One sets the standard price of redemption at 20 shekels for a male and 10 shekels for a female. Twenty is the number that corresponds to the Hebrew letter *kaf*. This is a pictograph of a winged creature in flight. Ten is the number that corresponds to the Hebrew letter *yod* – which pictures a hand unleashing creativity, releasing gifts, or expressing praise.

If the vow of consecration relates to a child between the ages of one month and five years of age, the Holy One sets the standard price of redemption at five for a male and three for a female. Five is the number that corresponds to the letter *hey* – which pictures a source of revelation and inspiration. Three is the number that corresponds to the letter *gimel* – which pictures the action of walking while bearing a burden.

Dedication of Vows Made By or Concerning Persons Age 60 and Older

If the vow of consecration relates to a person over the age of sixty years, the Holy One sets the price of redemption at fifteen shekels for a man, and ten shekels for a female. Fifteen is the number that corresponds to the name *Yah* [*yod, hey*] – *i.e.* the Holy One's most honored name. As aforesaid, ten is the number that corresponds to the letter *yod* – which pictures a hand unleashing creativity, releasing gifts, or expressing praise.

Questions For Today's Study

1. To get started look up in Strongs and Gesenius the word translated in our verses as “*statutes*” [the NIV translates it “*decrees*”] and write the Hebrew word, with Hebrew letters and vowel markings, its verb root, and a Hebraic conceptual definition.
2. In verses 3-13 the Holy One prophesies and creatively releases blessings over His People - over us who are engrafted into Israel through Messiah Yeshua as well as natural Israel – *as* we do three things in relation to the wonderful words He spoke to us under the Chuppah at Sinai. The blessings the Holy One releases over us are stupendous and wonderful beyond belief. Read over them several times to let the magnitude of the Holy One's covenant love for His People sink into your spirit. Nothing the world, or television, or any travel agency, or any career, or any church or synagogue, or even one's own imagination can offer can compare to what The Holy One has laid up in store for those who love Him. Find yourself in

these verses, and let His love pour over you.

[A] What are the three things we are to do to receive the blessings the Holy One prophesies and releases over us?

[B] List all the blessings you can see in these verses that the Holy One says will flow to us if we do these three things.

3. The haftarah reading for today is Yirmayahu 17:5-8, which reads as follows:

This is what the Holy One says:

***Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength -
whose heart departs from the Holy One.***

***For he will be like a shrub in the desert, and will not see when good comes,
but will inhabit the parched places in the wilderness - in a salt land that is not inhabited.***

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Holy One, and whose hope is the Holy One.

***For he will be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river,
and will not fear when heat comes.***

***For its leaf will be green; it will not be anxious in the year of drought,
nor will it cease from yielding fruit.***

[A] According to the opening verse of this reading, what opens a man up to a curse?

[B] According to the second verse of this reading, what will a man who has opened his life up to a curse fail to see?

[C] According to the third verse of this reading, what opens a man up to blessing?

[D] What does the Holy One promise will be the result of a man who both trusts and puts his hope in the Holy One?

[E] What do you think it means for a person to put his hope in/on the Holy One? Hope of/concerning what?

4. Our reading from the B'rit Chadasha comes from Yeshua's 'Upper Room Discourse'. The night before His death on the execution stake, the Master told His talmidim:

***A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me.
Because I live, you will live also.***

***At that day you will know that I am in My Father,
and you in Me, and I in you.***

[A] What does Yeshua mean that 'the world will see Me no more'?

[B] What does Yeshua mean that 'you [i.e. the talmidim gathered in that room] will see Me'?

[C] What does Yeshua mean by saying that He is 'in' the Father?

[D] What does Yeshua mean by saying that the talmidim are 'in' Him?

[E] What does Yeshua mean by saying that He is 'in' the talmidim?

*May the Holy One's people again hear and respond to His words
as a bride hears and responds to the voice of her bridegroom.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 68:22-35

*The Holy One said, **I will bring you again from Bashan,
I will bring you again from the depths of the sea;
That you may crush them, dipping your foot in blood,
That the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies.***

*They have seen your processions, God,
Even the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,
In the midst of the ladies playing with timbrels,
"Bless the Holy One in the called gatherings - even the Lord in the assembly of Yisra'el!"*

*There is little Binyamin, their ruler; the princes of Y'hudah, their council,
The princes of Zevulun, and the princes of Naftali.*

*Your God has commanded your strength.
Strengthen, O Holy One, that which you have done for us.
Because of your temple at Y'rushalayim, kings shall bring presents to you.*

*Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples.
Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver.
Scatter the nations that delight in war.
Princes shall come out of Mitzrayim.*

*Kush shall hurry to stretch out her hands to the Holy One.
Sing to the Holy One, you kingdoms of the eretz! Sing praises to the Holy One! Selah.
To him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old;
Behold, he utters his voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe strength to the Holy One!
His excellency is over Yisra'el; His strength is in the skies.*

*You are awesome, O Holy One, in your sanctuaries.
The God of Yisra'el gives strength and power to his people.
Praise be to the Holy One!*