

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah B'chukotai:*** Leviticus 26:14-39
 Haftarah: Jeremiah 17:1
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:14

But if you do not sh'ma Me, and do not asah all these mitzvot . . .
[Leviticus 26:14]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 67:8-;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 8th Petition, *Mishpat*, the Petition for Justice

V'im-lo tishme'u li - If/as/when and to the extent you lo sh'ma Me ... ***v'lo ta'asu et kol-ha-mitzvot ha-eleh*** – and you make/build all these mitzvot into your lives in practical, visible, and functional ways Leviticus 26:14.

As we have been discussing, our Bridegroom-King has designed – and spelled out clearly in the Torah - a radical lifestyle for His beloved Bride-to-be. Of what will does the stunning, paradigm-shifting lifestyle for which our Bridegroom-King is grooming us consist? It consists of the *chukot*, *mitzvot*, and *mishpatim* of Torah. There is no 'plan B'. These are His ways. These are His Kingdom protocols. These are our the *lenses* through which He intends to radically redefine the way we see, approach, and impact the world. The more *chukot*, *mitzvot*, and *mishpatim* of Torah we incorporate into our lives, and the deeper the level at which we incorporate them into our interactions with our fellow men, with the realm of time, and Creation, the more Divine light we will be empowered to release into – and the more positive Kingdom impact we will be able to introduce to - our various spheres of influence.

This means – if we are willing to *sh'ma* – that we do not have to come up with a plan to fix (or save) the world – He already *has* the plan. All we have to do is yield to His plan.

What is His plan? It is simple. Instead of going through life as if we were independent agents advancing our own agendas, we are to follow the diplomatic protocols He has established. We are to *yalach* [walk in] our Bridegroom-King's *chukot*. We are to *sh'mar* and *asah* our Bridegroom-King's *mitzvot* and *mishpatim*. In every aspect of daily life, conversation, relationship and interaction we are to serve Him as Royal Ambassadors and Trusted Representatives of His Kingdom instead of serving ourselves. If, as, when, and to the extent we adopt this approach

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to life, His glory begins to shine through us. And the stunning radiance of His glory always opens the doors of men's hearts to embrace His Royal Persona, His Wisdom, and His Presence.

***A Supernaturally Empowered Set of Royal Bridal Garments
Specially Designed to Reflect the Bridegroom's Glory – Not Ours***

The Holy One designed each of us to be capable of *reflecting His amazing glory*. The only way a human being can catch the rays of the Holy One's Light and make those rays visible to ordinary men, however, is to learn to walk *b'chukotai* – i.e. in the *chukot* of Torah. The Holy One intends that as we put on each individual instruction of the Torah, that instruction becomes a 'reflecting panel' enables us to reflect His glory. That is what the *chukot* were designed for. His glory cannot be reflected to the earth by natural human beauty, natural human strength, or natural human talent, His glory cannot be reflected on earth by human beings doing what human beings do to acquire or distribute wealth, health, or self-actualization. His glory cannot be reflected on earth by personal achievement, by organizational development, by institutional reform, by ministry success, by church or synagogue growth, by ethnic cleansing, by cultural superiority, by political activism, or by national policy. His glory cannot be reflected on earth by acts of heroism or programs of philanthropy. Those things bring glory to men – and to men's systems, institutions, ideas, and programs - not to Him. His glory shines forth from human beings only if, as, when, and to the extent we engage in *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing His *mitzvot*. These and these alone are the '*good works*' our Creator and Redeemer has foreordained that we should walk in.

The *mitzvot*, *mishpatim*, and *chukot* of Torah are not designed to bring us salvation; they are designed to bring Him glory. They are not for our merit; they are for *His* praise. They do not declare our goodness to the world – they declare His wisdom to it. They do not testify of our righteousness; they testify of *His* excellence. So ... how well have you been wearing the white linen garments of Torah He designed for His betrothed Bride to wear, Beloved?

Will We Cherish – or Walk Away From – Our Bridegroom's Heart

The *yalak*, *sh'mar* and *asah* lifestyle is not something we do to earn God's approval or to obtain His blessings - it is simply a part of our new identity – the *most natural expression of who we are*. If, as, and to the extent that we let the wonder and majesty our Divine Bridegroom's plan for mankind and its redemption sink into our thick skulls we find ourselves joyfully yielding our lives to our Divine Mission. As the *teivah* [ark] of Noach yielded to the floodwaters, so we yield to the empowering instructions of our Creator. We find absolute freedom and joy in giving up our personal agendas to become reflectors of His glory.

Like a Hebrew bride-to-be we are simply in the process of becoming the kind of bride her bridegroom has called her to be. The blessings? They are not rewards. HE is the reward. The blessings are something else altogether. The blessings are simply His way of setting us apart from the rest of the world. The nations are to see and marvel at the blessedness of the People who walk in covenant with the Holy One. Likewise, the progressive disciplines of the Holy One, as painful as they will be - are not “condemnation”. They are merely “in flight corrections”. Like a mother eagle the Holy One pushes spoiled little eaglets out of the nest and lets them free fall awhile to teach them a lesson. But like that mother eagle the Holy One never lets the chicks hit the ground. Like the eagle the Holy One spreads His wings wide, swoops down at just the right moment, and catches His people in free-fall, then takes them one by one back up to the nest to try it again.

The Dangerous Pathway of Those Who Choose To Reject or Trivialize the Bridal Calling and Empowerment

The verses we read today answer to the thoughtful question ‘But *what if* we choose to *disregard the new identity and lifestyle has offered us?* What if we choose to strip off the pure, linen reflective garments He has laid out for us to wear, the wings which HE has given us to lift us above the world, and, like our ancestor Ya’akov, *we put on Esau’s clothes, and act like the popular Esau’s of the world?* What will life on planet earth hold in store for us then? The Holy One is not about to get His feelings hurt like a jilted husband, give up on the relationship, and write us a bill of divorce. If He didn’t abandon us, seek an annulment, or have us stoned by angels after the Golden Calf episode when we committed adultery right under His betrothal *chuppah* it’s a pretty safe bet that He isn’t going to give up on us ever, under any circumstances.

Why? Because He knew in advance – before He ever made covenant with our ancestors – that we would be unfaithful to Him and to His covenant, would sometimes behave badly, and other times be downright troublesome. He knew full well that we were *human*. He knew full well that we were *fallible*. He knew full well we were a *stiff-necked people*. And because He is not only all-knowing but is also all-wise, He doesn’t wring His Hands in dismay, sulk, or throw a tantrum when the inevitable happens, and we reject His Plan in favor of ‘our own way’. He has a plan to ‘win us back’ to Him and His covenant if we ‘mess up’ and wander away from Him.

You see Beloved, it is not so much through our faithfulness, but through His bringing us back to Him after our adultery, that His goodness and His glory is revealed to the world. He would not leave – and has not left – His plan for the

redemption of the world in our hand, much less made it dependent upon our ‘performance’. He is God. He is the Redeemer. And His Plan of redemption is infallible.

So what is His Plan for dealing with our post-Fall penchant for self-destructive behavior? How will He deal with us when we choose folly over wisdom, vanity over mission, and rebellion over relationship? What will be His Strategy if we go off the rails of Torah, and start pouring gasoline on the world’s wildfires instead of living water? The Holy One does not want us to be ignorant. Like a loving Father, He spells out for us, in advance, the series of progressive disciplines He will lovingly apply to us to wake us up, and bring us back to our senses, and lead us back to Him, His Plan, and His Paths of Life, Health, and Peace. Here is how He says the disciplines designed to lead us back to Him will begin:

. . . *if/when you **lo sh’ma** me, and **lo asah** all these **mitzvot**;
and if/when you will reject my statutes,
and if/when your soul abhor my ordinances,
so that you **lo asah** all my mitzvot, but break my covenant; I also will do this to you*

The Bridegroom-King’s Plan of Carefully Measured, Redemptive Discipline

If we make the choice to strip off the pure, linen reflective garments our Bridegroom-King has laid out for us to wear; if we decide to discard the very wings that HE has given us to lift us above the world; if we, like our ancestor Ya’akov, choose instead to put on Esau’s clothes, and act like the popular Esau’s of the world; if we do these things, what will life on planet earth hold in store for us then? If we choose to disregard the new identity, mission, and destiny to which our Divine Bridegroom has given us and do what seems right in our own eyes, and resist loving call after loving call, opportunity after opportunity, to make *teshuvah*, what will happen *then*, in such a circumstance? Like a loving Father the Holy One spells out for us in advance *a series of progressive disciplines that* He promises to lovingly apply to us – not to punish us, but to wake us up to what we are throwing away, to bring us back to our senses, and lead us back to who we really are.

Wake Up Call #1: Increasing Episodes of Anti-Semitic Terrorism

The first wake up call for those who choose to walk on the broad road that leads to destruction – i.e. the road of lawlessness – involves two closely-related warning signs. The first signal to ‘wake up’ and return to the Covenant Pathway is the proliferation of anti-Semitic terrorism. The Holy One says it this way: ***I will appoint terror*** [Hebrew *behalah* – extreme anxiety resulting in inner trembling] ***over you***. Leviticus 26:16a. Whenever we begin to see acts of anti-Semitism arise in the world we can know that violent acts of terrorism are not far behind. Instead of spending

our time and passion raging against the anti-Semites and terrorists we should ask ourselves if the reason they are suddenly able to succeed in their plans to wreak havoc on us is not because the evil they represent has gotten worse but is, at least in part, because we forsaken the '*weightier matters of Torah*', and have instead become lukewarm, have waxed pseudo-intellectual and indulged too arrogantly in politics, and exalted a form of religion over the substance of our Covenant calling. In other words, we have to ask ourselves if we have ceased to consider our main purpose to be a *light to, and a source of abundant blessing for*, the nations.

Wake Up Call #2: Pestilence

The second wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we ignore the first warning is the outbreak of infectious diseases. The Holy One does not throw out diagnoses to clarify what specific diseases He is talking about. He does not specifically mention things like cancer or hepatitis or MERS or SARS or Swine Flue, or Ebola, or Legionnaire's Disease, or Bubonic Plague, or AIDS. He doesn't specify if there is the source will be man, beast, enviro-toxin, immune-toxin, or otherwise. He doesn't say if they will or will not come through mass government-mandated mass inoculation, nuclear meltdown, ecological catastrophe, or super-volcano eruption. He does, however, describe some of the symptoms: consumption [Hebrew *shachafet*, from a verb meaning to peel or shed skin] and fever [*qadachat*, from a verb meaning to inflame]. He also warns that the disease process will finish the eyes and will make the soul to pine away. **Leviticus 26:16b.**

Whenever therefore there is an outbreak of an epidemic of life-threatening communicable disease, even as our society's doctors and scientists are trying to develop a vaccine and/or palliative treatments we who know Torah should be seeking to identify and taking the lead in making *teshuvah* for all the breach(es) of Covenant which we have allowed to become entrenched in the fabric of our culture that have brought this corrective discipline upon us.

And since what the Holy One has ordained to be affected first is our eyes, we should consider that *we have as a culture – like Chava in the Garden – developed a habit of using our eyes to look at and fixate upon things which are the antithesis of our Covenant Calling*. Chava let the Serpent seduce her into looking at the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as a prelude to eating of it. She allowed her eyes to look at the fruit – and see it through the lens suggested by the Serpent's attitude and cunning words. Once her eyes strayed, her animal soul – *i.e.* her *mind*, *will*, and *emotions* - followed. She began to look at that which was the antithesis of the Will and Plan of the Holy One for her as 'good for food', 'beautiful to look at', and 'desirable to make one wise'. **Genesis 3:6.** What things of this world which are totally antithetical to our calling as Ambassadors of the

Kingdom of Heaven have we allowed ourselves to fix our eyes upon and think are valuable and to be desired when they are in reality toxic?

Wake Up Call #3: Economic Crisis/Collapse of Free Market System

The third wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first two is the takeover of our economy by foreign interests. As the Holy One Himself puts it: ***You will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it. Leviticus 26:16c.*** Whenever therefore we see foreign investors from countries and ethnic groups adverse to us taking over or siphoning off our agricultural produce and controlling our economic system our souls should awaken to the reality that as a culture we have strayed from Covenant in prolonged and serious ways.

If we seem to be unable to be fruitful in our secular labors due to others taking control of our earnings base or taking credit for our work, the first thing we should probably look for is any area in which we have allowed our attitude toward and use of material things. Has our approach to, affection for, and our use of the material things of this world caused us to stray from the protocols set forth in Torah. Were we not open-handed to our brother, and give him bread and water when he was destitute? Did we not give the poor among us interest-free loans to help re-establish him as a productive member of society? Did we not treat the poor among us as equals? Did we not leave a corner of each of our fields, and gleanings, each year, and set aside a tithe of all we made in the third and sixth year of each seven-year cycle for the poor and the stranger? Did we not observe the protocols of *sh'mittah* and *yovel*?

Wake Up Call #4: Enemy Attacks/Raids/Strikes

The fourth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first three is to start to suffer some defeats at the hand of our enemies. As the Holy One puts it: ***I will set my Face against you, and you will be struck before your enemies. Leviticus 26:17a.*** When and to the extent we are walking in the Torah the Holy One has promised He will put our enemies to flight before us. If we start losing battles, the problem is not that our enemies have suddenly gotten stronger or smarter. The problem in such a case is that *we have left the pathway of protection*. So if we begin to lose skirmishes with our enemies, we should immediately ask ourselves *what we are thinking, saying, and doing that opens up the door to enemy attacks against us*. Where have we given the enemy a foothold? If we do not seek the Holy One, make *teshuvah*, and change our approach to life back to the protocols of Torah, things are just going to go from bad to worse for us. Cue the Fifth wake up call.

Wake Up Call #5: Oppression

The fifth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first four is to give our enemies dominion over us and cause us to live in constant anxiety and paranoia. As the Holy One puts it: ***Those who hate you will rule over you; and you will flee when none pursues you.*** [Leviticus 26:17b].

These five wake up calls constitute a pretty serious group of disciplines. But alas, if these do not cause us to return to the Torah lifestyle and take up once again our priestly role on the earth as a functioning lamp to the nations, this is just phase I of a much larger plan to get our attention. The five things I have listed above are merely ‘1st stage covenant disciplines’. If we do not respond to our Divine Bridegroom’s 1st stage of covenant disciplines with the proper response of *t’shuvah* [i.e. a heartfelt return to Him and to the *sh’m’a* lifestyle He has laid out for us in Torah, with fruit of repentance] the Holy One in no wise gives up. His covenant with us is unshakeable, everlasting. His Plan will not be thwarted by our stubborn refusal to be who He has called and empowered us to be. He has a second level of covenant disciplines – a little more severe – in His Mind to get our attention. He says: ***If you will not yet for these things sh’m’a Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your breaches of Covenant.***

Wake Up Call #6: Drought

The sixth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first five is to withhold the rain upon which our Beautiful Land of Milk and Honey is completely dependent. He will stop sending the former and latter rains in their season. He will allow us to taste the ravages of drought. As the Holy One puts it: ***I will break the pride of your power: and I will make your sky as iron, and your eretz as brass.*** Leviticus 26:19.

What is a drought? It is a long season of below-average precipitation. Such ‘dry seasons’ result in prolonged shortages in the water supply, and thereby cripple the ecosystem, endangering drinking water, growing crops, livestock, and food supplies at every level of the food chain.

Wake Up Call #7: Famine

The seventh wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first six is to cause the seven species the Land of the Patriarchs produces so abundantly to cease producing for us. As the Holy One puts it: ***Your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.*** Leviticus 26:20. If we walk away from the Torah’s mitzvot, mishpatim and chukim there will be no more of: ***Your threshing will last till the time of vintage, and the vintage will last till the time of sowing; you will eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.*** Instead we will know crop failure

and famine – until we return to our true identity, mission, and destiny as He describes it in Torah.

Alas if we still do not *sh'ma* and make *teshuvah* after these two 2nd stage disciplines have run their course, the Holy One will tighten the grip of His cords of lovingkindness even tighter on us with a 3rd stage of disciplines. He promises: *If you walk contrary to me, and won't listen to me, I will bring seven times more plagues on you according to your violations of Torah.* Leviticus 26:21.

Wake Up Call #8: Invasive Species/Beasts

The eighth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first seven is to cause the predators of the countryside, who will likewise be made hungry by the famine, to invade our neighborhoods and homes. As the Holy One puts it: *I will send the beast of the field among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your ways shall become desolate.* Leviticus 26:22. As was the case in Egypt, when the land was invaded by swamp creatures, swarming predators, flying insects and locusts, so it will be with us. The glorious promise He gave to the *sh'ma* People to 'rid the land of wild beasts' for them [Leviticus 26:6b] will not attach to those who persist in *lo sh'ma*-ing.

But the Holy One is not through trying to convince us yet. If the 3rd stage discipline of wild beasts does not bring us to *teshuvah*, there is a 4th stage of disciplines He will employ. *If by these things you won't be reformed to me, but continue to walk contrary [Hebrew q'ri – in enmity/opposition] to me; then will I also walk contrary to you, and I will chasten you yet seven times for your covenant breaches.* Leviticus 26:24.

Wake Up Call #9: Invading, Besieging, & Occupying Armies & Unfriendly Migrant Populations That Bring Pestilence

The ninth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we do not respond to the first eight is the most serious yet. He will call forth a foreign army to invade and besiege us. As the Holy One puts it: *I will bring a sword on you, that will execute the zeal of the covenant; and you will be gathered together within your cities. When you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy.* Leviticus 26:25.

Not enough? Still not ready to return to the Torah lifestyle and Bridal affection? Still in love with the Serpent's thoughts and the world's goods? Here is where the most drastic form of discipline enters the picture. Read with trepidation what the Holy One promises will be unleashed on us as the next stage of discipline: *If you won't for all this sh'ma me, but walk contrary to me; then I will walk contrary to you in wrath; and I also will chastise you [Hebrew yasar –discipline corporally] seven*

times for your sins. The Holy One goes on to warn: *You will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall you eat.*

Wake Up Call #10: Desecration of Monuments, Symbols, & Shrines

The tenth wake up call the Holy One has promised to send to us is a direct strike against that which we are relying upon. He promises: *I will destroy your high places* [Hebrew bamot – hilltop shrines; pulpits for teaching/preaching], *and will cut down your images* [Hebrew chamam – stone images of pagan objects of veneration], *and I will cast your dead bodies on the bodies of your idols.* Worst of all, He says: *... and my soul* [in-the-moment will, mind, and emotions] *will abhor you.* In connection with this, the Holy One goes on to say: *... I will make your cities a waste* [chorbah – dried up ruin] *and will bring your sanctuaries to desolation* [shamem – silent wasting; being reclaimed by creatures of the wilderness], *and I won't smell the savor of your sweet odors.*

Wake Up Call #11: Desecration of the Land of Israel

The eleventh wake up call the Holy One promised to send us to get our attention is to allow the pollution of the land of promise. This is the penultimate sign of our failure as a Covenant people. The Holy One declares: *I will bring the land into desolation* [shamem – i.e. silent wasting; being reclaimed by creatures of the wilderness]; *and your enemies that dwell therein shall be astonished at it.*

Wake Up Call #12: Dispersion and Exile

The twelfth wake up call the Holy One promised to send us to get our attention is to allow our enemies to drive us out of the land the Holy One promised to entrust to Avraham and his seed forever. If desecration of the land is the penultimate sign of our failure as a Covenant people, being forced to leave that land in shame is the ultimate sign of such a failure. The Holy One says: *I will scatter you* [zara – i.e. sow like seed] *among the nations, and I will draw out the sword* [keruv – a short sword/dagger] *after you:*

He then adds: *... your land will become a desolation* [shamamah – silent wasteland, reclaimed wilderness] *and your cities will be laid waste* [chorbah – dried up ruin]. But the Holy One will turn even this ignominy to good. He promises that while we are gone, He will purify the land of its defilement. For He declares: *then the land will [finally] enjoy its Shabbatot – throughout the time it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; even then will the land rest, and enjoy its Shabbatot. As long as it lies desolate it will have rest, even the rest which it didn't have in your Shabbatot when you lived on it.*

Wake Up Call #13: Captivity and Humiliation

The thirteenth wake up call the Holy One warns us that He will allow to come our way if we refuse to be who we are called to be and live the Torah lifestyle is a season of captivity and humiliation. He says:

*As for those who are left of you,
I will send a faintness [Hebrew **morech** – sense of vulnerability; timidity] into their heart
in the lands of their enemies: and the sound of a driven leaf will put them to flight;
and they will flee, as one flees from the sword;
and they will fall when none pursues. They will stumble one on another,
as it were before the sword, when none pursues:
and you will have no power to stand before your enemies.*

Wake Up Call #14: Ethnocentric Holocaust

The fourteenth wake up call the Holy One warns us that He will allow to come our way if we refuse to be who we are called to be and live the Torah lifestyle is intense persecution, enslavement, pogrom, forced labor in concentration camps, and, ultimately, mass campaigns of genocide. If we don't wake up. If we do not heed the previous thirteen strong warnings. If we simply refuse to *sh'ma* His Voice. As He puts it:

*You will perish [Hebrew **abad** – do hard labor as slaves] among the nations,
and the land of your enemies will eat you up.*

The Promise of the Great Redemption and Restoration to Come!

Even yet, the Holy One lays out a scarlet thread of hope for redemption. He is not trying to destroy us – He is trying to awaken, heal, and restore us! Though He has wounded us, still He will heal us! If we will but call out to Him, and turn to Him, and commit our troth to Him again, He will hear from Heaven – and will visit us, and restore everything we have lost and more. As He Himself describes it:

*Those who are left of you will pine away [Hebrew **maqaq** – melt; wither] in their iniquity
in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers
will they pine away with them.*

*They will confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers,
in their trespass which they trespassed against me.
It is because they walked contrary to Me that I walked contrary to them,
and caused them to go into the land of their enemies.
But if and when their uncircumcised heart is humbled,
and they acknowledge that their condition is the result of their iniquity;
then will I remember my covenant with Ya`akov;
and also my covenant with Yitzchak,
and also my covenant with Avraham will I remember;
and I will remember the land.*

*Yet for all that has occurred, when they are in the land of their enemies
I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly,
and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Holy One their God;
but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors,
whom I brought forth out of the land of Mitzrayim
in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God:
I am the Holy One.*

The Covenant the Holy One made with Avraham and his progeny is eternal. He has sworn, and He will perform it.

Keeping It All In Perspective

As you read of these progressive disciplines the Holy One warns us will come upon those of His Covenant People who refuse to embrace His easy yoke of Torah - which He Himself promises to empower them to walk in – please remember that the issue is never whether the Covenant people will go to “heaven” or “hell” when they die. Keep the verses in context. The context is that a redeemed community has already been taken from bondage and betrothed to the Holy One under a chuppah. This community of redeemed souls has already taken several steps into a new life. They have built a scale model of His Throne Room on earth. They have clamored to hear and put into action the Holy One’s Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover Protocols. They have responded enthusiastically to His call to become His holy people - *kedoshim* and *kohanim* whose purpose is to sanctify His name in all the earth. Therefore to them walking “*in His statutes*” is not a means of or a prerequisite to “eternal salvation any more than it is that for us today. Waling in His statutes is merely the natural response of a people whose hearts overflow with love for their Glorious Bridegroom-King, and who have voluntarily chosen to treasure His words and His covenant like a bride treasures a love letter from her bridegroom. To such a people – and hopefully to us today - His words are sweet and wonderful, not a burden or a ‘yoke of law’. Everything our Bridegroom has spoken is as wonderful to us as the beautiful “*Let there be Light*” which brought about the First Day of Creation.

As we have been discussing, our Bridegroom-King has designed – and spelled out clearly in the Torah - a radical lifestyle for His beloved Bride-to-be. He intends that as we put on each individual instruction of the Torah that instruction becomes a ‘reflecting panel’ that will enable us to reflect His glory into the Earth.

Of what will does the stunning, paradigm-shifting lifestyle for which our Bridegroom-King is grooming us consist? It consists of the *chukot*, *mitzvot*, and *mishpatim* of Torah. There is no ‘plan B’. These are His ways. These are His Kingdom protocols. These are our the *lenses* through which He intends to radically redefine the way we see, approach, and impact the world. The more *chukot*, *mitzvot*, and *mishpatim* of Torah we incorporate into our lives, and the deeper the level at which we incorporate them into our interactions with our fellow men, with the realm of time, and Creation, the more Divine light we will be empowered to release into – and the more positive Kingdom impact we will be able to introduce to - our various spheres of influence.

This means – if we are willing to *sh'ma* – that we do not have to come up with a plan to fix (or save) the world – He already *has* the plan. All we have to do is yield to His plan.

What is His plan? It is simple. Instead of going through life as if we were independent agents advancing our own agendas, we are to follow the diplomatic protocols He has established. We are to *yalach* [walk in] our Bridegroom-King's *chukot*. We are to *sh'mar* and *asah* our Bridegroom-King's *mitzvot* and *mishpatim*. In every aspect of daily life, conversation, relationship and interaction we are to serve Him as Royal Ambassadors and Trusted Representatives of His Kingdom instead of serving ourselves. If, as, when, and to the extent we adopt this approach to life, His glory begins to shine through us. And the stunning radiance of His glory always opens the doors of men's hearts to embrace His Royal Persona, His Wisdom, and His Presence.

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 Y'shua 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 in to 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 16:19-21, which reads as follows:

*O Holy One, my strength, and my stronghold,
and my refuge in the day of affliction,
to you shall the nations come from the ends of the eretz, and shall say,
'Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies,
[even] vanity and things in which there is no profit.*

Shall a man make to himself gods, which yet are no gods?

*Therefore, behold, I will cause them to know,
this once will I cause them to know my hand and my might;
and they shall know that my shem is the Holy One.*

In order to understand what brings the nations to the Holy One from the ends of the earth, we have to put this passage in context. Let's do so by reading Yirmayahu [Jeremiah] 16:1-18, where Yirmayahu tells us:

*The word of the Holy One came also to me, saying, You are not to take a wife in this place.,
neither are you to have sons or daughters here.*

*For thus says the Holy One
concerning the sons and concerning the daughters who are born in this place,
and concerning their mothers who bore them,
and concerning their fathers who became the father of them in this land:*

*They will die grievous deaths:
they will not be lamented, neither will they be buried;
they will be as dung on the surface of the ground;
and they will be consumed by the sword, and by famine;
and their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky,
and for the animals of the eretz.*

*For the Holy One says, Do not enter into the house of mourning,
neither go to lament, neither bemoan them;
for I have taken away my shalom from this people, says the Holy One,
even lovingkindness and tender mercies.*

*Both great and small will die in this land;
They will not be buried, neither will men lament for them,
nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them;
neither will men break [bread] for them in mourning,
to comfort them for the dead;
neither will men give them the cup of consolation
to drink for their father or for their mother.*

You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and to drink.

*For this is what the Holy One of Hosts, the God of Yisra'el, says:
Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days,
the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness,
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.*

*It will come to pass, when you show this people all these words, and they will ask you,
'Why has the Holy One pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity?
or what is our sin that we have committed against the Holy One our God?*

*Then you will tell them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken me, says the Holy One,
and have walked after other gods, and have served them,
and have worshiped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my Torah;
and you have done evil more than your fathers;
for, behold, every one of you walks after the stubbornness of his evil heart,
so that you don't sh'ma me. Therefore will I cast you forth out of this land
into the land that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers;*

and there shall you serve other gods day and night; for I will show you no favor.

*Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Holy One,
that it shall no more be said, As the Holy One lives,
who brought up the children of Yisra'el out of the land of Mitzrayim;
but, As the Holy One lives, who brought up the children of Yisra'el from the land of the north,
and from all the countries where he had driven them.*

*I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers.
Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Holy One,
and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters,
and they shall hunt them from every mountain,
and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks.
For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my face,
neither is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.*

*First I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double,
because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable things,
and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.*

[A] At the time this prophesy was given by Yirmayahu were the people of Judah and Jerusalem under the prophetic blessings of Vayikra 26:3-13 or were they under the prophetic disciplines of Vayikra 26:14-39?

[B] What layer(s) of corrective disciplines were they about to come under?

[C] In today's Haftarah we see the prophet *Yirmayahu* praying again -- like in the haftarah for *B'har*. What is he praying for now?

4. In I Peter 1:13 *Kefa* [Peter] gives 3 instructions for us as to how we should approach life in light of what has been said in verses 3-12.

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober,
and set your hope fully
on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah*

[A] Go back and read I Peter 1:3-12. Summarize the "background" *Kefa* gives for the instruction of 1:13. [In other words what does the "therefore" at the beginning of verse 13 refer to?]

[B] List the three instructions *Kefa* gives on how we should approach life.

[C] In Strong's look up the Greek words our English Bibles translate as "prepare", "sober", "hope", "grace", and "revelation". Write the Greek words in Greek letters, and the definitions given for these words by Strong's.

[D] Search out the Hebrew words which *Kefa* would have used instead of these words. Write those Hebrew words in Hebrew letters, with appropriate vowels markings, and describe the Hebraic word picture of each such word.

*May the Holy One's people again hear His words as a bride hears the voice of her bridegroom.
And may the abundant blessings of the Holy One's covenant
follow all His People wherever we go.*

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!*