

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah B'chukotai:*** Leviticus 26:3-46
 Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-25
 B'rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13-15

...And you will be My People.

[Leviticus 26:12]

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

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

Im-b'chukotai teleichu – if/as/when/to the extent you walk in My directives ...***v'et-mitzvotai tishmeiru*** – and treasure/cherish/guard My lifestyle teachings ...***va'asitem otam*** – and make/build them into a practical, visible, functional Kingdom reality ...***v'natati gishmeichem b'itam*** – I will entrust abundant rain to you in its time Leviticus 26:3-4a.

Our delicious journey through Sefer Vayikra - known in the Western world as 'the Book of Leviticus' - is almost over. The final parsha of the book is called 'B'chukotai'. This is frequently translated as 'In My Statutes'. In this parsha, as in the vast majority of this Book, the Holy One will be doing all the talking. He will get down to the 'nitty gritty' of our inconvenient truth. He will lay out for us in graphic terms the critical secret to the success of our assigned mission of *tikkun nefesh*, *tikkun adam*, *tikkun aretz*, and *tikkun olam* – or, Heaven forbid, the catalyst for calamitous failure thereof. Pay attention - this is AN ESSENTIAL BRIEFING!

What is the key to the success of our mission? It is not doing great exploits. It is not waging great wars. It is not learning and teaching great doctrines. It is not building temples, administering sacraments, or performing miracles. The secret to our success in the Great Enterprise to which the Creator has called us is much more basic than any of those things. The secret is "***im-b'chukotai teleichu***" (if/as/when/to the extent you walk in My directives...). What, on the opposite end of the spectrum, is the stone cold guarantee of mission failure and environmental chaos? It is "***v'im lo tish'me'u li***" (but if/when/to the extent you do not sh'ma Me ...).

The Holy One's Torah is our oxygen; His declared Will is our planet's - indeed the kosmos' - only hope. Our response to the Holy One's Torah, and our alignment with His declared Will, will be what decides the condition of the Ecosystem in our generation. If, when, and to the extent we embrace the inspiration, empowerment,

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and situation-by-situation navigational guidance of His Torah the Kingdom of Heaven's agenda of healing and restoration will be unstoppable; but the opposite is true as well. If, when, and to extent we think we know better than the Holy One Who made us, and therefore reject His directions, everything (and everyone) we touch will suffer the consequences. Either way, we had better get used to it - our presence is going to send shockwaves throughout the world. That is the secret of the covenant. That is lynchpin of the Plan. That is why WE REALLY NEED TO DO THIS 'AM SEGULAH' / MAMLEKET KOHANIM / GOY KADOSH 'THING' THE HOLY ONE'S WAY, sticking as close to Torah's script and trouble-shooting guide as possible.

Here is the stunning truth: As goes B'nei Yisrael, so will go the nations ... and the environment ... of earth.

The Holy One's Grand Redemptive Plan Is Unfolding

Our Bridegroom-King has a Grand Plan to redeem mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline, and to restore the whole of Creation, geographical region by geographical region, to its intended state of Edenic beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*. Considering what we are giving Him to work with, His Plan is ambitious to say the least. What is most amazing is that His strategy to accomplish the goal does not involve dispatching any of angelic beings that He commands to invade and conquer earth. He has another tactic altogether. He has chosen the seed of Avraham – natural and engrafted - to serve as His supporting cast in that glorious endeavor. No, He is not delusional. No, He is not naïve. He knows exactly what He is getting us into by partnering with human beings. He has no illusions that any one of us – or for that matter any tribe or group of us - is or ever will be up to the task we are assigned. He is under no delusion that we as a collective will always be faithful. He has been down this road before. He has seen a lot of 'epic fails'. He remembers Adam and Chava in the Garden. He remembers Kayin going to the field with Hevel. He remembers Avram and Sarai birthing Yish'mael out of impatience. He remembers Rivkah frantically trying to manipulate Yitzchak's blessing. He remembers Ya'akov dressing up in Esav's clothing and putting a stumbling block before the eyes of his blind father. He remembers Rachel and Leah competing shamelessly for Ya'akov's affection. He remembers the vigilante bloodshed inflicted and the human trafficking engaged in by Yosef's brothers. He remembers Yehudah lying carnally with, then presuming to judge, Tamar. He remembers Aharon taking the leading role in the calf god debacle. He remembers Moshe getting enraged and shattering the first set of Divinely inscribed tablets into a million pieces. He remembers him presumptuously ordering a genocide – and declaring that genocide to be in HIS HOLY NAME, no less. He was right there each time. He saw it all unfold. And in each situation, when the smoke cleared, and human beings showed their worst – He paid the price, cleared away the rubble, rebooted the Plan, and redeemed it all.

It is because He knows our penchant for folly and rebellion that He has, in the third and central book of Torah, laid out for us with painstaking specificity each element of the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol that He has designed for us and our children and children's children to undergo each year. It is through these protocols of return, renewal, re-centering, reformation, and restoration that He intends to transform us from the selfish, over-reactive, flesh-obsessed shrews we are when we come to Him, into a shining bride-people that is holy in the ways He is holy, who loves people as He loves them, and who sees and responds to the seeds of redemption in every situation instead of resorting to sulking, offense, outrage, complaint, accusation, blame-casting, in-fighting, rebelling, and self-justification.

Remembering the Overall Theme of Sefer Vayikra

As a result of what we have learned through the *Korbanot*, *Yom Ha-Sh'mini* and *Kedusha* Discourses, we are beginning to realize that our Covenant Partner is the epitome of 'good'. He is by no means angry, temperamental, vindictive, or cruel. While He is very zealous, His zeal is 100% *for* us, *for* humanity, and *for* His Creation – not *against* any of those things. While He is supremely glorious, He goes out of His way to be accessible to us and approachable by us. While He is intensely holy, He understands and graciously makes allowances for our attraction to the common instead of the holy and toxic/unclean instead of the wholesome/pure. While He is vastly superior to us in intellect, in righteousness, in faithfulness, and in absolutely every other way, He never lords His superiority over us. While He is exceedingly mighty, He is even more wonderfully patient, merciful, compassionate, gentle and kind. While He has a cutting instrument in mind for us, we now know that it is a surgeon's scalpel, not a jihadist's *machete*. While we know He is out to challenge our comfort zones and make us more beautiful, peaceful, and strong than we ever imagined we could be, He is not doing this so that He can use us as some kind of trophy wife. He has a much, much bigger, far, far nobler purpose in mind for us than that. He has a grand plan to redeem mankind from its sin-addiction and restore Creation to its intended state of Edenic promise, and He wants to train us to co-labor with Him in that great endeavor. When He chose us for this honor He knew exactly what He is getting us into. He knew that, in and of ourselves, we are no better, no smarter, no more talented, and no more righteous than other human beings He created. He knows that we are among the peoples of the earth as Sinai is among the mountains – *i.e. nothing special or worthy of attention*. As Sinai's natural size, flora and fauna, or appearance completely underwhelm the casual observer, our natural size, productivity, or appearance seem to scream anything but '*watch us totally revolutionize the world*'. But the Holy One is a creator's Creator and a redeemer's Redeemer. He has Kayin, and Noach, and Avraham, and Ya'akov, and Yosef, and even Moshe and Aharon on his resume. He has proven, over and over

again, that He is really good at taking ordinary – even weak, broken, and horribly flawed – things/people and using them to accomplish extremely special – even impossible - things. He is therefore fully confident that just as the infusion of His Presence, His Holiness, and His Words made Sinai special, so the infusion of His Presence, His Holiness, and the active operation of His Words will make *us* special. And He wants us to know that those three factors – His Presence, His Holiness, and the active operation of His Words - are the only things that can bring forth beauty from our ashes, hope from our despair, light from our darkness, freedom from our bondage, or majesty from our misery.

Next on the Kingdom Agenda ...

As soon as we step off into *B'chukotai* the focus of the Ultimate Divine Bridal Makeover through which the Holy One has been processing us through in since the opening aliyah of *Sefer Vayikra* is about to shift. The attention of the Holy One will turn from us as individuals to our camp as a collective entity. The way our camp is set up and functions is about to get a radical makeover as well – one that will mirror in quality and depth the amazing makeover we have been undergoing in our individual lives. However, the fact that the theme of the Holy One's revelation downloads is about to shift to the camp as a collective entity does not mean that the radical paradigm-shift for us as individuals is at an end. That transformation is designed to be *on going*. It will not conclude until we are truly function as bone of our Bridegroom-King's bone and flesh of His flesh - going only where He is going, doing what He is doing, feeling only the emotions He is feeling, and speaking into every situation and over every person only what He is speaking into it, him, or her. The shift in the focus of the narrative merely means that the time has come for all who have been *hearers* of the words describing the intimate fellowship the Holy One wants to have with each of us as a betrothed Bride-to-be to start to become *doers* thereof – in the context of very real interactions with very real human beings. Torah is not designed to be a framework of theology. It is not intended to be a creed. Torah is divine energy – an empowering spiritual life force that we invite to take over our minds, wills, emotions, and spirits and totally re-wire the way we think, the way we speak, the way we perceive and approach life's purpose, processes and stages, the way we deal with people, the way we react to irritations, aggravations, accusations, and challenges, and the way we act, so as to conform to our Bridegroom-King's personality, character, brilliance, and essential goodness.

A new chapter of *Extreme Makeover* is being written every day – as we who are alive and in covenant with the Holy One meet Messiah in, and walk with Messiah through, the *transformative bride-training processes* the text of *Sefer Vayikra* describes. So...how is the process of *removing every spot, wrinkle and blemish from your heart, soul, mind and will* coming for you?

The Torah Is Light – Are You Shining?

Each human being is a unique creative work of the Holy One - a new and magnificent 'life form' specifically designed to reflect His glory. He has a beautiful plan for each of us. We are called to ***become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.*** **Philippians 2:15-16.** But the light with which we shine must be His Light – not our own. That is why He has given us the Torah. The *mitzvot* of Torah are designed to serve as *the reflective material that catch the rays of the Holy One's divine Light, and make those rays visible on earth, to ordinary men.*

The Holy One provides the Light. That is His 'part'. Every *mitzvah*, *mishpat*, and *chuk* Torah calls on us to perform is designed to serve as a Divine light-reflecting panel, shining just the amount of Divine Light needed into our specific generation, location, and situation.

As sunlight is to a garden, field, or forest, so are our *mitzvot* to our world. Torah represents the Creator's Brilliant Plan of ecosystem macro-management. The more and the weightier *mitzvot* our words and actions introduce into our world, the more inspiring, synergizing Divine light the people, places, and situations we impact will receive. The process of doing that is through *asah*-ing the Holy One's *mitzvot*.

So, we joyfully yield our lives to our Divine Mission and to our very purpose for existing. We yield to the instructions of the Holy One like the *teivah* [ark] yielded to the floodwaters, and we gladly give up our personal agendas to become reflectors of His glory. And that is what Messiah meant when He taught us ***'You are the light of the world Let your light so shine before men that they will see your mitzvot and give glory to your Father in Heaven.'*** We do not engage in *mitzvot* in order to get people to praise us, or to impress the Holy One, or to be thought or judged as 'righteous' – we engage in *mitzvot* so that people will see the *wisdom* and the *goodness* and the *glory* of our God.

Do You Understand What is at Stake – In This World and the Next?

Alas, therein lies the 'rub'. In order for strangers to the Covenant to see the wisdom and goodness and glory of our [their!] God with any consistency, we have to be faithful and steadfast in doing our *mitzvah*-part day-in and day-out, in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, in times of favor and abundance, and in times of persecution, abuse, and lack.

What will happen in and to our assigned spheres of influence 'if' we actually choose to do what we are called and empowered to do and become what we are

called and empowered to be? What will happen around us if, as, when and to the extent we put on the mitzvot as we are called to and begin reflecting Divine Light outward into our surroundings? The Holy One is about to blow our minds the way He blew Avram's mind so many years ago. He told Avram He was going to 'make [him] a blessing' and that 'in [him] all the families of the earth will be blessed.' He is about to get specific as to what the things He promised to Avram will look like in real time, in we will only heed the call to **lech lecha** [i.e. go out for/to find your true identity and destiny] the way our ancestor did.

Covenant Promises We Can Count On

Before we leave Sinai and head off into the desert toward our promised land, our Covenant Partner in Heaven gives these wonderful promises to all who will *yalak* His *chukot* and *sh'mar* and *asah* His *mitzvot*:

...I will give gishmeychem b'itam [your rains in their season],
and ha-aretz yevulah [the land will yield its increase],
and etz ha-sadeh yiten piryo [the trees of the field will yield their fruit].

Sounds good so far, doesn't it? But the Holy One is not finished.

***Your threshing will extend to the time for the vintage,
and the vintage will extend to the time for sowing.
And you will eat your bread to the full,
and you will dwell in your land safely.***

I will grant shalom b'aretz [peace in the land] ***so that you will sleep without fear.***

Is it sinking in yet? Are you beginning to see what a Heavenly treasure chest of blessedness that the Holy One has designed to burst forth if, as, when, and to the extent we *yalak* and *sh'mar* and *asah* His instructions for how to live a full, abundant, impactful life on planet earth in real time? Ah, there is still much, much more:

I will rid the land of chayah ra'ah [living things that cause harm],
and cherev lo-ta'avov b'ar'tzeichem [the sword will not pass through your land].
Uredaftem et-oyveichem [You will chase away your enemies]
and they will fall before your sword;
***Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred, and a hundred of you
will defeat ten thousand, as your enemies fall before your sword.***

Are you overwhelmed with His stunning generosity yet? Believe it or not, He is still not through:

***I will turn to you, making you fertile and numerous,
thus keeping My covenant with you.
You will continue eating the previous year's crops long after their time,
and you will eventually have to clear out the old crops because of the new.***

*I will keep Mishkani b'tocheichem [My dwelling in your midst],
and I will not grow tired of you.*

*Vehithalachtu b'tocheichem [I will walk among you].
I will be a God to you, and you will be a nation [dedicated] to Me.
[Leviticus 26:4-13]*

These promises, spoken as we are being prepared to leave the comfort and security of Sinai and head off into the desert, parallel the prophetic “*Arise, My love, and Come with Me*” of the Divine Suitor in Song of Songs 2.² The Holy One is telling us that the time to just sit under His shade and meditate on His instructions for living is drawing to a close, and that the time to put His instructions about relationships and justice and care for the poor *into practice*, in *real life situations*, is drawing near. The Holy One is about to kick us out of the nest [i.e. Sinai] like a mother eagle kicks her eaglets out of the nest. He is about to say over us the equivalent of:

*“Fly, my children! Rise Up and catch the Thermal Updrafts! Soar!
Be what and who I have created you to be!”*

And Now - the All-Important ‘If’

In our English translations the paragraph of promises we have been reading begins with the two-letter word “*if*”. The Hebrew word, which is *im* [*alef, mem sofit*], means more than just if – it covers the entire spectrum of ‘*if, as, when, and to the extent*’. Remember, the *mitzvot* of Torah are the essential implements Divine ecosystem-management. That means that we have a significant part in determining how much of the fruitfulness and *shalom* blessing the Holy One will be activated within our spheres of influence. If we consistently walk in the Holy One’s Ways, and do/build His Mitzvot as we go, the wonderful array of blessings specified in Leviticus 26:3-13 will continue to flow into the zones of impact as intended; but if we get distracted, or discouraged, and disengage from the Mitzvot ... well, we start having an ecosystem failure.

Hmmmmn. We only experience the fullness of the Holy One’s blessing upon our nation *if* we live *Torah-inspired* and *Torah-consistent* lives. Does this mean that what the Holy One is giving us in Torah is a system of ‘*works-based righteousness*’, as so many have taught? No Beloved. Not at all. The Hebrew prefix which we find before the phrase *b’chukotai* in our text is *alef, mem*, which transliterates as *im*. This is a Hebraic prefix which conveys the picture of an on-going relationship, an ebb and flow, of life. The first letter of the prefix, *alef*,

² See Song of Songs 2:8-13 – when the Divine Suitor comes in a new and powerful manifestation, and calls His Beloved one to “*Arise*” and “*Come with Me*”, calling upon her to leave the pleasant place in the shade where He has nurtured her with apples and raisin cakes, and walk with Him, doing what He does, following His lead. It is the call to get up from the banquet table, grab His arm, and *dance*.

represents the Holy One. The *mem* is a hieroglyphic picture of a wave of water. The combination of *alef* and *mem* in this phrase does not form a word [unlike the English ‘if’] but instead provides a Hebrew “cue” – much like a musical notation on a piece of sheet music describing the tempo at which the song is to be played. The cue made up of the letters *alef-mem* means to *put in motion – to animate and give life to – whatever is being discussed*. It means that whatever is under discussion is *constantly moving, like a wave of water*.

This pictograph means we are not talking about a “one-time” do or die matter, but about a *long-term series of events*. We are talking about a *directional flow*. *We are talking about surrendering to the flow and letting the river of life carry us to our destination*. So the Hebraic message conveyed by phrase ‘*im-b’chukotai*’ would perhaps be better rendered something like “*in the course of our ongoing relationship, in the ebb and flow of life, as you are walking out my statutes, sh’mar my mitzvot, and asah them ...*” This means that the blessings of which our aliyah will speak do not come as *rewards for isolated incidents of Torah-consistent conduct - quid-pro-quo*, so to speak. We don’t get ‘brownie points’ or ‘gold stars’. Instead the Holy One is telling us that the blessings He describes in our aliyah *are the natural products of the Torah lifestyle - all of which come forth “in season”*.

Please note that this also means that the disciplines of which our aliyah will speak do not result from an isolated incident of conduct inconsistent with Torah, either, but from persistently refusing to *sh’ma* the Holy One, to walk with Him as the ‘weaker partner’ in the relationship, responding to His lead, to treasure and cherish and keep close watch over His *mitzvot*, or to build one’s life upon them, and from persistently refusing to heed His calls to make *teshuvah* as Torah instructs us.

But what if ...?

But ... what if ...? *What if ...we choose to disregard the new identity our Divine Bridegroom has given us by redeeming us, calling us His own, and prophetically speaking the mitzvot and chukot and mishpatim of Torah over us? What if we 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 if after doing so we resist loving call after loving call, opportunity after opportunity, to make teshuvah as Torah allows, and we persist in rejecting our new identities as the Holy One’s betrothed in favor of our own ways, or those of the people and cultures around us.*

What will happen *then*, in such a circumstance, pray tell? The Holy One does not leave us in suspense. Like a loving Father the Holy One spells out for us in advance

a series of progressive disciplines He will lovingly apply to us, to wake us up, and bring us back to our senses, and lead us to make *teshuvah*. The phases of progressive discipline He lays out for us will b

Life's Most Critical Decision Looms Before Us

We have been invited to go far beyond mere intellectual *belief in* our Creator. We have been invited to go far beyond affiliation with any organization or institution that lays claim to His Name. We have been invited – and called – to actually *bond with the Creator Himself* - in heart, in soul, in mind, and in strength. We have been invited – and called - to become *echad* ...a functional unity ...with Him gradually, as a Bride becomes echad gradually with her Bridegroom. Please note, therefore, that the first word of *B'chukotai* is 'if'³. *If* is going to be the theme of this parsha. And this is about as big an 'if' as there can be in life. _

Im-b'chukotai t'lechu

If you walk/go forth b'chukotai [in my *chukot*],

v'et-mitzvotai tish'meiru

and value/cherish/guard and keep watch over to do my mitzvot

v'asitem otam

and build/construct/give form and shape and substance to them ...

[Leviticus 26:3]

The phrase “*B'chukotai*” – which is usually translated as ‘*in My Statutes*’ - describes how we who are redeemed by the Holy One and called apart to be His Ambassadors on earth are to live, to think, to speak, and to act. We are now not only citizens but emissaries of another Kingdom. The ways of our King and His Kingdom are now our ways. Because we have come to know the Holy One, trust Him, and enjoy the benefits of living in covenant with Him, absolutely everything we think, say, and do should now be *in accordance with our beloved Redeemer's ways*. After all, He who knows us best and who redeemed us is by far the best qualified to advise and instruct and train us in how we should live – and represent Him – the rest of our days.

The great privilege of representing the Bridegroom-King – and walking the runways of real life modeling the beauty of His Kingdom to the nations - is what Torah is all about. Torah is intended *to totally redefine our personalities, our attitudes, our value systems, our responses to circumstances, and our approaches to life*. Torah is supposed to *infiltrate the way we think, the way we talk, and the way we do everything a human being can do*.

Our Divine Bridegroom has EMPOWERED us to do His Will by the *sheer Creative*

³ In Hebrew, the word is ***im*** [alef-mem].

and Prophetic force of His Words. But He does not *constrain* us to do them against our will.

The Hebrew Nouns in the All-Important ‘If’ Clause

Before we can understand what we are in today’s aliyah called of the Holy One to do we must, I believe, come to grips with the essence of the instructions the Holy One has given us. In our English Bibles we read that what we are to do is to live our lives in a proper relationship [the substance of which is discussed below] to the Holy One’s ‘*ordinances*’ and His ‘*commandments*’. While the terms ‘*ordinances*’ and ‘*commandments*’ are certainly possible translations of the Hebrew nouns used in the text of Torah, particularly in light of the context of those nouns in today’s English I believe that when employed to attempt to translate the Sinaitic pronouncements of the Holy One to His Redeemed Community - i.e. the Torah – words like ‘*laws*’, ‘*ordinances*’, ‘*decrees*’, and ‘*commandments*’ project a grossly inaccurate picture of what the words of Torah were intended to be. So while I know words like ‘*laws*’, ‘*commandments*’, and ‘*ordinances*’ are what most Christians think of first when we think of Torah, please indulge me for a few moments as I try to paint for you what I see as the Hebraic picture of what the Holy One spoke over us at Sinai.

Torah is not about *laws* or *commandments* or *ordinances* that He insists we ‘obey’ or we will go to Hell. He did not redeem us from bondage, bring us under His Sinaitic Chuppah, and call us His *am segulah* in order to issue a set of ‘*laws*’ or ‘*commandments*’ or ‘*ordinances*’ to us. What Torah consists of instead is *wise and loving instructions* – carrying full *prophetic empowerment* – of how human beings were designed to live full, healthy, purposeful, beautiful lives. Torah is the fuel that our Creator designed for us, to propel us, individually and collectively, into the Divine Destiny and to fulfillment of our Divine Purpose as His Chosen Bride-People. I know this may sound radical to some. But hear me out. I start from the premise that the Holy One is not a monarch who rules after the manner of James I of England [whose translators introduced to us the English translations ‘*laws*’, ‘*ordinances*’, and ‘*commandments*’]. James I⁴ was, alas, a king who demanded that everything be done as he wanted it. There was no covenant relationship between James I and the people of England. He was a Scot, who was hated by the English populace. He was also a cruel despot who crushed – or at the very least banished from his kingdom - anyone who disagreed with him. James I’s words were ‘*laws*’, ‘*ordinances*’ and

⁴ The ‘King James Bible’ was written at a time, and in a country, preoccupied with the ‘Divine Right’ of kings. History shows King James I to have been a heavy-drinking monarch obsessed with quelling religious, cultural and political tensions that he believed threatened his kingdom. A Scot, he had little use for Parliament, Catholics, or Puritans. It was his repressive policies that led to the first immigration of Puritans to America. His purpose in commissioning a new translation of the Bible appears to have been primarily, if not exclusively, political. In this atmosphere, it is understandable that the words issued from a throne would be interpreted as ‘*laws*, *decrees*, *ordinances*, and *commandments*’.

‘commandments’ in the truest sense. You had to obey them to the letter - or you were history. Read up on James I’s policies and you will understand a little of why the translators who worked for him would consider anything spoken from a *position of power* [such as the Holy One unquestionably has] to be ‘laws, ordinances, and ‘commandments’.

Here is the good news - the Holy One is *not like James I of England in any regard*. Unlike James I the Holy One is a *Covenant-keeping King* – a King Who is *benevolent*, and *slow to anger*, and *merciful*. Unlike James I of England - and all other earthly monarchs claiming ‘divine right’ to have their orders obeyed ‘or else’ - the Holy One has *nothing to fear from dissent*. The Holy One’s kingdom *cannot be shaken*. No one can dethrone Him. Disobedience cannot undermine Him. Insubordination – nay even outright *betrayal* - by His covenant-partners does not even delay, much less deter, His Kingdom vision and goals.

Do you understand? Do you see how beyond ‘commands’ and ‘ordinances’ and ‘laws’ the pronouncements of our Covenant Partner are? Hence the Holy One’s beautiful and powerful words should not be thought of as either *royal decrees* or *legislation*. They are *covenant words* - bold, powerful, prophetic empowerments - *not laws/commands* for us to obey under penalty of either death or Hellfire.

The Holy One always speaks *for our good*, with our best interest in mind, in order that we might fulfill our Divine purpose and destiny. He does not speak commands and directives too great for us to obey in order to condemn us when we inevitably fail. So with this in mind let us look carefully at the Hebrew nouns in the opening verse of our text, to see if we can begin to truly understand what the words He spoke over us at Sinai mean and how we can effectively *sh’ma* His words, cooperate with His Divine Plan, and fulfill our Divine Destiny as the Betrothed Bride He has chosen.

Torah tells us we who are redeemed of the Holy One are to ‘walk’ in the Holy One’s ‘ordinances’. The Hebrew phrase is ‘*B’chukatai*’ – usually translated ‘*in My ordinances*’. The root word of *B’chukotai* is *chukah*⁵. It is from the verb root *chaqaq*⁶. It literally means *to engrave* – *i.e. to make an outline, or pattern, in stone*. The noun *chukah* means *that which has been engraved and which serves as a pattern or map or blueprint*.

In this context *chukatai* means “*the things which I [the Holy One] have engraved or inscribed*” (i.e. on the tablets of stone He gave to Moshe at Sinai and on the hearts of His

⁵ Chukah is *chet, kuf, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #2708, it is pronounced *khook-kaw’*.

⁶ Chaqaq is *chet, kuf, kuf*. Strong’s Hebrew word #2710, it is pronounced *khaw-kawk’*.

special-treasure people) to serve as a *map* or *blueprint* for their lives. The “ordinances” in which our Bridegroom-King is calling us to *walk* are thus the *Aseret HaDibrot* (the so called ‘ten commandments’) – the preamble to our Betrothal Covenant. For a full explanation of the purpose of and our relationship to the *Aseret HaDibrot* see Thursday’s aliyah of *Yitro*.

Now let us look at the word traditionally translated as ‘commandments’ - those sayings of the Holy One that our aliyah tells us we are to ‘keep’ and ‘do’. The Hebrew word is ‘*mitzvot*. The root word is *tzavah* (*tzade, vav, hey*). Like all Hebrew verb roots *tzavah* is a hieroglyphic word picture. The letter *tzade* (which makes the *tz* sound), is a picture of a man bending in submission to The Holy One’s Hand upon His life. The letter *vav* (which makes the *v* sound) is a picture of a connecting device – like a nail or a peg with which one connects one thing (a picture frame, for instance) to another (a wall, for instance). The letter *hey* (which makes the *h* sound) is a picture of a window, and specifically that which allows two-way vision (that is, it allows something outside of an individual to be seen from inside, and it allows something inside an individual to be seen from the outside). *Tzavah* is thus the making of a connection between the decision to submit to the Holy One *in theory on the one hand*, with tangible, visible, actions revealing to the world that the decision has been made. Adding the Hebrew letter *mem* as a prefix to any word is a Hebraic cue to put the noun in motion, consider it part of an ongoing, living process. The Hebrew phrase *mitzvot*, commonly written in English as the word *mitzvot*, thus refers to a recognizable course of tangible, visible actions revealing to the world that a man or woman has made a decision to *sh’ma* the Holy One, and to conform one’s attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds, to His words. The *mitzvot* which the Holy One is saying, in this aliyah, that we are to *asah*, are the instructions of Torah given after the *Aseret HaDibrot* (which He describes in verse 3 of chapter 26 as His *chukot*).

Now let us move from an investigation of the Hebrew *nouns* contained within the ‘*if*’ clause of Leviticus 26:3 to an investigation of the even more important Hebrew verbs contained in that clause.

The Hebrew Verbs in the All-Important ‘If’ Clause

What according to our English Bibles are we to do ‘in’ His *chukot*? We are to *walk* in them. What are we to do with His *mitzvot*? We are to *keep* them and *do* them. But let’s not be satisfied with the English translations of the instructions of the Holy One. Let’s look at the actual words He used – the Hebrew verbs – and see what living *b’chukotai* really means.

1. Learning to ‘Walk’/Go Forth

As aforesaid, according to our English Bibles what we are to do in His statutes is to ‘walk’ in them. The Hebrew word our English Bibles translates as ‘walk’ is *talek*, a

future tense form of the Hebrew verb root *yalak*⁷. This word is usually translated as ‘go’ or ‘go forth’. It means to *traverse distance*, i.e. to go from one place to another. It can mean to go by any medium of transportation - to crawl, to walk, to run, to swim, to drive, fly, or to take a train, boat, or bicycle. It refers to *every move you make as a human being*. The first Biblical usage of this verb is found in Genesis 3:14, where the Holy One tells the Serpent ‘*on your belly will you go [yalak] ...all the days of your life.*’ The next is in Genesis 7:18, where Torah describes what happened to the *teivah* [ark] when the floodwaters rose upon the earth:

*And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth;
and the ark went [yalak] upon the face of the waters.*

This is the perfect picture of what it means to *yalak* in the Holy One’s statutes [*chukot*]. They are to be to us like *water*, we are to be like the *teivah* [ark]. They are to determine our direction as the floodwaters determined the direction of the ark. The ark had neither rudder nor sail – it went only where the waters carried it. And the statutes of the Holy One are likewise to determine our *bearing*, our *velocity*, our *destination*, and *the time it takes us to get there*, the way the waters of the flood were the sole determinant of how fast the ark traveled, where it ended up, and how long it took to make the journey.

We are to respond to the Torah the way the ark responded to the waters of the flood. We are to let it lift us up out of the mundane, out of the ordinary, out of the aftermath of the Fall, and buoy us up, taking us along a course the Holy One has charted, but which only He controls. Remember, as we have discussed in previous lessons, the ark had no rudder or steering mechanism, and could only float wherever the Holy One willed it to float. Torah is to be “the wind beneath our wings”. Does this describe your lifestyle, Beloved? Do you see your life as lived ‘in His statutes’? Have His statutes become to you ‘*waters that are risen, waters to swim in, a river that cannot be crossed over?*’ Ezekiel 47:5.

2. Ours to ‘Keep’

But that is not all. According to our English Bibles what are we to do with His commandments [*mitzvot*]? We are to do two things with them – we are to *keep* them and we are to *do* them. The Hebrew verbs translated as ‘keep’ and ‘do’ are, respectively, *sh’mar* and *asah*. The word *sh’mar*⁸ is one of the most frequently used Hebrew verbs in the Bible. This word means:

- to *treasure*,
- to *aggressively guard*,
- to *carefully keep watch over* (as one would a child, or a precious

⁷ *Yalak* is *yod, lamed, kaf sofit*. It is Strong’s Hebrew word #3212.

⁸ *Sh’mar* is *shin, mem, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #8104, it is pronounced *shaw-mar’*

- treasure),
- to *diligently defend*,
- to *protect*,
- to *cherish*,
- to *treasure*, and
- to *bring to full potential*.

Sh'mar is one of two verbs the Holy One used to describe what man was to do with the Garden in which the Holy One lovingly placed him:

*And the Holy One Elohim took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden
to dress it and to keep [sh'mar] it.
[Genesis 2:15]*

Think like a *gardener*. Think of the Holy One's *mitzvot* as *your private garden*. You want to bring out the maximum color and beauty from each plant, each tree, each vine, each flower. You keep watch over it constantly. You protect it aggressively against harmful bugs who would suck the life out of it. You erect a fence around it to keep out the 'critters' who try to sneak in by night, and the human predators who want to pick – or crush - its produce for their own amusement. Got the picture? Now apply it to the Holy One's *mitzvot*. *Sh'mar* it the way a gardener *sh'mar*'s his or her garden. Nurture it. Let each *mitzvah* grow to its full potential, producing its unique *aroma*, its *leaf*, its *bloom*, and its *fruit* in your life.

Adam and Chava had the garden to *sh'mar*; we have the Holy One's *mitzvot*. They are not really that different when you think about it. We are to respond to the Torah with *wonder*, with *awe*, and with *love*. We are to *hover over* it, watching it to see what wonderful thing it will produce next. And we are to *interact with it* in such a way that we cooperate with it in the production of fruit of ever-increasing quality and quantity. But we are to do more than just *sh'mar* the *mitzvot* of the Holy One. Our English Bibles tell us we are also to 'do' them. Note the sequence. First comes the guarding, watching over, and nurturing – then comes the 'do'-ing.

3. Just 'do' it!

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translates as 'do' is *asah*⁹. The first Biblical usage of this word is found very early in the creation narrative, in Genesis 1:7. There, we are told that the Holy One '*asah*-ed' the firmament, and divided the waters above the earth from the waters of the earth. The same verb is used in Genesis 1:11, 12, 16, 25, 26, and 31, and in Genesis 2:2, 3, 4, and 18, to describe the Holy One's creative work. It is the word used to describe what the Holy One did to cause such things as not only the firmament, but also the sun and the moon, the animals of the earth, the trees and plants of the field, not to mention man and

⁹ *Asah* is *ayin, shin, hey*. Strong's Hebrew word #6213, it is pronounced *aw-saw*'

woman, to come into existence out of primordial goo.

To *asah* is thus not to ‘do’ in any mechanical, repetitive fashion – it is *to bring the inanimate to life, to recreate matter in a fresh new form*. It means *to transform something lifeless into something full of life, meaning, and purpose*. That is a perfect description of what we who are in covenant with the Holy One are called to do with Torah. We are to *take that which is inscribed in stone tablets, and cause it to come to life before the eyes of the world*. In so doing, we are to do what Messiah did – we are, at least in some particulars, actually *becoming the living Torah* in the world. We are to bring the Holy One’s mitzvot to life, making each one *a fresh new form of life testifying of the Holy One’s creative genius*. The *mitzvot* of Torah offer a *unique privilege* the Holy One has given man, to actually *participate in the Holy One’s creation*. *Mitzvot bring the Holy One’s glory into whatever environment they occur*. As a potter interacts with clay to fashion something recorded on a blueprint in his head, so are we to interact with the Holy One’s *mitzvot*, and fashion of our days and weeks and years and relationships and activities on earth into the blueprint the Holy One laid out for us when He knit us together in our mother’s womb.

***But ...What If We Refuse to Take Up Our Posts,
and Play the Role Assigned for Us?***

But - dare we even ask? - what if ...we do the unthinkable, and choose to disregard the new identity our Divine Bridegroom has given us? What if we refuse to engage with the *mitzvot* and *chukot* and *mishpatim* of Torah over us? *What if we refuse to take up our assigned posts, and/or to play the role the Holy One has assigned to us? What if we 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 if after doing so we resist loving call after loving call, opportunity after opportunity, to make teshuvah as Torah allows, and we persist in rejecting our new identities as the Holy One’s betrothed in favor of our own ways, or those of the people and cultures around us. What will happen then, in such a circumstance, pray tell? The Holy One does not leave us in suspense. Like a loving Father the Holy One spells out for us in advance a series of progressive disciplines He will lovingly apply to us, to wake us up, and bring us back to our senses, and lead us to make teshuvah. The phases of progressive discipline He lays out for us will be the subject of tomorrow’s aliyah. Don’t touch that dial!*

***Some Final Thoughts on the Blessings and Disciplines
the Holy One has Promised***

The blessings the Holy One has promised all who *yalak* His *chukot* and *sh’mar*

and *asah* His *mitzvot* promised are indeed wonderful, but it would be a fool who decided to try to *sh'ma* the instructions of the Holy One simply, or even primarily, *in order to receive blessings*. We do not – or at least we should not – *asah/build/do* the *mitzvot* of Torah for any selfish or self-serving reason. We should not *do/asah* them for reward. We should not *do/asah* them for justification. We should not *do/asah* them for praise. We should not *do/asah* them to impress or earn favor. We certainly should not *do/asah* them in the false belief that we must do so to escape ‘Hell’ or qualify for admission to Heaven. We are to *do/asah mitzvot* simply because it is our new nature, as the Holy One’s beloved and redeemed, to do so. It is all part of the Grand Redemptive Plan. It is all about bringing purpose into vanity, order into chaos, light into darkness, and fruitfulness into the world’s most barren wastelands.

The *yalak, sh'mar* and *asah* lifestyle is not something we choose in hope of earning either God’s approval or His blessings - it is simply a part of our new identity. It is simply the *most natural expression of who we are*. Like a Hebrew bride-to-be we joyfully surrender to His call to become the kind of bride we have been called – and we now greatly desire - to be. When we embrace the *mitzvot* of our Bridegroom-King joyfully, with great *shalom*, the people in our spheres of influence and zones of impact both see and have opportunity and incentive to choose for themselves beauty and majesty of our God and His Ways over the hot mess that their sexuality, materialism, pseudo-intellectualism, and entertainment obsessed, with their misplaced priorities, have created.

The blessings mentioned in today’s aliyah are merely a means to an end – the great Kingdom objective of us becoming a blessing to every family on the face of the earth. The blessings merely set us apart from, and whet the appetite of, the rest of the world. The nations are to see the blessings and long for the source of the blessings. We are to inspire others to seek the blessedness that they can plainly see flows from walking in covenant with the Creator of the Universe.

Likewise, the progressive disciplines the Holy One warns us about in today’s aliyah, as painful as they will be - are not “condemnation”. They are merely “in flight corrections”. As a mother eagle pushes spoiled little eaglets out of the nest and lets them free fall awhile to teach them a lesson, so will the Holy One let us experience a little of the shock of free-fall for our own good. But like that mother eagle never lets the chicks hit the ground, the Holy One never lets us completely crash, burn, and fade into oblivion. He made a covenant with our fathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov that He would never allow that to happen. His Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration – and the part He has designed for us to play in it – is far too important. So like the mother eagle, at just the right moment the Holy

One will spread His wings wide, step out of invisibility to come after us where we are, catch us in free-fall, then take us one by one back up to the nest to try it again.

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

If we choose 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.

First of all, we should understand that 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 did not abandon Adam after the Fall, did not abandon Kayin after the murder of Hevel, and did not 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* – well, don't you think it's a pretty safe bet that He isn't going to give up on us *ever*, under *any circumstances*? He knew in advance – before He ever made covenant with our ancestors – that we would be unfaithful to Him and to His covenant. He knew full well that we were *human*. He knew full well that we were *fallible*. He knew full well we – like all human beings of every race, nation, tribe, and tongue - were a *stiff-necked people*. He knew that we would sometimes behave badly, and that at other times we would be downright troublesome. And because He is not only all-knowing but is also all-wise, at no time will He wring His Hands in dismay, or sulk, or throw a tantrum, just because the inevitable – which He foreknew – happens, and we, temporarily at least, reject His Plan in favor of doing things 'our own way'. Before we ever mess up, He wants us to know that He has a brilliant plan to 'win us back' to Him and His covenant.

He will never leave the success of His plan for the redemption of the world in our hands. Nor will He ever make that plan dependent upon the perfection of 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 waywardness and rebellion? 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 to make *teshuvah*. Here is how He says the disciplines designed to lead us to *teshuvah* will begin.

...if/as/when/to the extent 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:

Wake Up Call Number One For Those Who Choose the Broad Path that Leads to Destruction

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 terrorism. The Holy One says it this way: *I will appoint terror over you. Leviticus 26:16a.*

Whenever we begin to see terrorism emerge in our midst on a regular basis, such that fear of it changes the way we live our lives, we should immediately take note. Instead of spending our time and passion raging against the 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 instead because our protection has been eroded away by reason of some systematic departure on our part from the Bridegroom-King’s ways.

Wake Up Call Number Two to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Wake Up Call

The second wakeup call the Holy One has promised to send to us if we ignore the first warning is the outbreak of communicable diseases. The Holy One does not throw out diagnoses to clarify what communicable diseases He is talking about. He does not specifically mention things like cancer or hepatitis or MERS, SARS, Swine Flu, AIDS or COVID. He instead describes some illustrative symptoms: *even consumption* [Hebrew *shachafet*, from a verb meaning to peel or shed skin] *and fever* [*qadachat*, from a verb meaning to inflame], *that will finish the eyes and 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 vaccines 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 started fixating on what she saw. 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 Number Three to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Two Wake Up Calls

The third wakeup 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.**

If ever 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*?

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.

Wake Up Call Number Four to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Three Wake Up Calls

The fourth wakeup 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 Number Five to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Four Wake Up Calls

The fifth wakeup 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]. That is 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’.

What If ...After All That, We Still Choose Our Own Way?

If we do not respond to our Divine Bridegroom’s 1st stage of covenant disciplines with the proper response of ***teshuvah*** [i.e. a heartfelt return to Him and to the *sh’ma* 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’ma Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your breaches of Covenant.***

Wake Up Call Number Six to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Five Wake Up Calls

The sixth wakeup 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, and 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.

Wake Up Call Number Seven to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Six Wake Up Calls

The seventh wakeup 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 shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall 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 Number Eight to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Seven Wake Up Calls

The eighth wakeup 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 will walk contrary 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 Number Nine to Those Who Persist on the Broad Path Despite the First Eight Wake Up Calls

The ninth wakeup 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 vengeance 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.
When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven,
and they will deliver your bread again by weight: and you will eat, and not be satisfied.*
[Leviticus 26:23-26]

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 forms of redemptive discipline enter the picture. Read with trepidation what the Holy One promises will be unleashed on us as a 5th stage discipline: *If you won't for all this listen to me, but walk contrary to me; then I will walk contrary to you in wrath; and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins.*

You will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters will you consume.

Desolation/Desecration of All We Have Built for Ourselves

*...I will destroy your high places, and cut down your sun-images,
and cast your dead bodies on the bodies of your idols; and my soul will abhor you.*

*...I will make your cities a waste, and will bring your sanctuaries to desolation,
and I won't smell the savor of your sweet odors.*

Desolation of the Land of Israel

*I will bring the land into desolation;
and your enemies that dwell therein will be astonished at it.*

Exile in Foreign Nations

*You will I scatter among the nations,
and I will draw out the sword after you:
and your land will become a desolation, and your cities will be a waste.*

*Then will the land enjoy its Shabbatot, as long as it lies desolate,
and 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 that it didn't have in your Shabbatot, when you lived on it.*

Persecution and Resultant Fearfulness

*As for those who are left of you,
I will send a faintness into their heart in the lands of their enemies:
and the sound of a driven leaf shall chase them;
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.*

Holocaust

*You will perish among the nations,
and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.*

Restoration/Redemption

*Those who are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands;
and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.
They shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers,
in their trespass which they trespassed against me,
and also that, because they walked contrary to me,
I also walked contrary to them, and brought them into the land of their enemies:
if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled,
and they then accept of the punishment 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.
The land also shall be left by them, and shall enjoy its Shabbatot,
while it lies desolate without them:
and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity;
because, even because they rejected my ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes.
Yet for all that, 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.*

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 at Sinai. 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 - *k'doshim* 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. Walking 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.

Today's Aliyah As Taught by Yeshua of Natzret

The message of today's aliyah was also the message of Yeshua of Natzret. At the conclusion of the so-called "Sermon on the Mount", after teaching Torah from the Holy One's perspective, Yeshua taught:

*"Everyone therefore who hears [i.e. sh'ma's] these words of mine, and does [i.e. asah's] them, I will liken him to a wise man, who **built** [asah-ed] his house on a rock.*

The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock.

*Everyone who **hears** these words of mine, and doesn't **do** [i.e. asah] them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.*

The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell -- and great was its fall."

[Matthew 7:24-27]

Sounds amazingly like Leviticus 26, doesn't it? So we might want to ask ourselves – "Was Yeshua a 'legalist'?" Was He putting all who do not follow the Torah in every particular, as He taught it, under a "curse" [a series of judgments in the form of rain, followed by floods, followed by strong winds, followed by beatings, and resulting in destruction]? No, Beloved. He was merely saying, as our aliyah for today proclaims, that the Holy One's Torah is *alive*, and *interactive*. He was teaching us that Torah is a pathway of life, where we find the Holy One walking, speaking, leading, encouraging, and blessing us - not a cold, dead "law" hanging over our heads, threatening us with punishment if we 'disobey'. He was teaching us that Torah is a mirror into which we gaze to see who we are. What is more it is an "enchanted" mirror - in the sense that it has a voice inside it saying "You are doing great!", or "You are doing well, but you need a little adjustment right there", and, when appropriate, "if you don't make some changes, and **soon**, big trouble is coming!"

Mazel Tov on the upcoming test, Beloved!

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 16:19-21. 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, Neither are you to have sons or daughters, in this place. 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 shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the sky, and for the animals of the eretz.***

*For thus says the Holy One, **Don't 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 shall not be buried, neither will men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them;***

*neither shall men break [bread] for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead;
neither shall 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 thus says the Holy One of Hosts, the God of Yisra'el:
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 shall happen, when you will show this people all these words, and they will tell 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 are to 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, you walk everyone 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 are coming, says the Holy One,
when it will 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.
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!*