

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Korach:*** **Numbers 18:20-32**
 Haftarah: **I Samuel 12:20-22**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 13:6-7**

You are not to profane the holy things/places/people/days of B'nei Yisrael ...
[Numbers 18:32(b)]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 10:12-18;

This Week's Amidah prayer is Petition No. 10: *Tzadikim* [Men Who Do the Will of the Holy One]

Vayomer Adonai el-Aharon – Then the Holy One told Aharon ... ***be'artzam lo tin'chal*** – you will have no inheritance in the land ... ***v'cheleq lo-yihyeh lecha betocham*** – and you will have no portion among them ... ***ani chel'qeicha*** – I am your portion ... ***v'nachalateicha betoch B'nei Yisra'el*** – and your inheritance in the midst of B'nei Yisrael. **Numbers 18:20.**

The Holy One is shifting the focus of the narrative. With our *identity and attitude issues* and our *mission and distraction issues* now sufficiently addressed (at least for the time being) our Bridegroom-King is ready to speak to us about *destiny and heritage issues* again. Today's aliyah is therefore not intended to teach principles of theology; it is about legacy. It is about things received in trust for one's bloodline, cherished, responsibly managed, and preserved intact for the next generation.

Have you thought about what kind of inheritance you want to leave to your children, children's children, and progeny? Have you thought about what kind and quality of heritage you desire to leave behind [a] in the material realm, [b] in the emotional realm; [c] in the behavioral realm; [d] in the relational realm, and [e] in the spiritual realm? Have you thought about whether, in your life, you are turning out to be a net *giver* - *i.e.* a fountain of blessing that just keeps giving, nurturing, and inspiring - or a net *taker* – *i.e.* a leech that just sucks the life out of, and injects toxicity into, every living thing that gets close to it?

A New Day Has Dawned – And The Focus Has Shifted

The time has come for us to accept some sobering realizations about the state of the Royal Household. Our adventure in the desert has, to date, not exactly brought out the best in us. Called to be a glorious Bride without spot or wrinkle, we have instead been behaving like a shameless, self-indulgent, high-maintenance, fit-throwing shrew. Commissioned to arise and go forth into the nations as royal

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ambassadors of the Creator of the Heavens and the earth, we have, instead, been acting like a gaggle of traumatized slaves suffering flare-ups of post-traumatic stress disorder. We have empowered to serve as an earthly Temple of the Most High God, we have, instead, behaving more like a house of spoiled children divided against itself; each of us has been seeking only his/her own *stubborn will*, his/her own *selfish way*, and his/her own *sadly misinformed sense of what is 'right' and 'good' and 'fair'*. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has given a lot of us a downright sour – and horribly self-obsessed - outlook on life. Joy is not in us. *Shalom* is not in us. The love of the Holy One is not in us. Patience and gentleness are far from us. Oh Dear - this is *lo tov* [not good]. Fortunately, our Bridegroom loves us far too much to let things stay this way. He has a plan to bring us out of this downward spiral and make us relevant again. And it involves a *priesthood* modeling for us a *far more excellent way*.

Our Bridegroom is, after all, *the All-Powerful, All-Wise Creator and King of the Universe*. He has a vast domain to administrate. He has a Great Plan to effectuate. He does not intend to spoil that Great Redemptive Plan by taking to Himself a *sour-faced, cold-hearted, self-obsessed shrew to sit beside Him on His Throne*. He will not have a co-regent who refuses to *sh'ma* His Words, who does not value and therefore will not *sh'mar* His Covenant, and who has too many other passions to have any energy or desire to *asah* His instructions for life and relationship. He will not share His Name with people who are not conversant in, at peace with, and fully dedicated to *His Agenda, His Will, His Way, and His Timing*. That means that some *major attitude adjustments* are going to have to be made in the Camp of the Redeemed – and *soon*.

Attitude Adjustments, Coming Right Up!

What does the Holy One desire of us? He desires *unity of purpose, unity of heart, and unity of vision*. See John 17: He planned it from the foundation of earth. He called it forth in 'real time' at Mount Sinai- and He will have it. Indeed, it will be *our highest pleasure* – indeed *the greatest passion of our hearts* – to give it to Him. Well ... *after the necessary attitude adjustments*, of course. Because *after the necessary attitude adjustments* we will realize that He is worthy. *After the necessary attitude adjustments* we will realize that all His Judgments are Beautiful. *After the necessary attitude adjustments* we will realize that all His Ways are Pleasant, and all His Paths are Peace. *After the necessary attitude adjustments* we will realize that every thought of His Heart toward us is, and has always been, and will always be, Pure. After the necessary attitude adjustments it will suddenly become clear to us that all our *petty offenses, and half-baked theological positions, and silly plans and programs, and selfish jockeying for position, power, and prestige* are ... well, *petty, and half-baked, and silly, and selfish*.

Bring on the attitude adjustments, O Bridegroom of Heaven! Tame this shrew!
And begin at long last to bring forth true, world-changing *beauty* from *our ashes*!

This Is Our Season of Healing and Restoration

The Holy One kicked off the new season of restoration yesterday by breathing a fresh, new breath of life into the priesthood of Aharon, his two sons, and their descendants. If the Bride is to be made ready, you see, the first thing that needs to happen is for the friends of the Bride to become inspired and passionate about their role in her preparation. In today's aliyah the Bridegroom-King will take the process one step further, by focusing upon the restoration of the specific group from which the recent rebellion fomented. That group was *Moshe and Aharon's own kinsmen, the Levi'im*. After all, *Korach*, the ringleader of the ill-fated coup, was a *Levi*. His rebellion against Moshe and Aharon was therefore the ultimate act of *civil war* – the *betrayal of a kinsman*. Korach is now gone – *swallowed alive by the earth along with all his worldly possessions*. But most of the Levi'im live on. How will Moshe and Aharon relate to them in light of what has occurred? Considering all that has happened, how will the rift that has developed between these close kinsmen be healed? Oh yes, Dear Reader, it most definitely can – *if* all parties are willing to submit to the Holy One's protocols.

A City Not Forsaken

The Holy One wants to assure the Levi'im that despite their ugly episode of rebellion they have not forfeited either their *calling* or their *inheritance*. In today's aliyah, therefore, the Holy One is going to perform a miracle of restoration in the Levi'im much in the same way as in yesterday's aliyah He performed a miracle of restoration in the heart of Aharon. The Holy One starts this process by reiterating the special calling He has given the tribe descended from Leah's third son. Specifically, He assigns to Levi's progeny the responsibility of safeguarding the other tribes from the death that would occur if they approached the holy place presumptuously. The Levi'im are truly called to be "their brothers' keeper". One's "holy nation".

The Nachalah – Inheritance

In the concluding aliyot of parsha Korach we will have numerous encounters with the Hebrew word *nachalah*². This Hebrew word is often translated into English as 'inheritance' or 'possession' or 'heritage'. But a *nachalah* is not an inheritance as modern Westerners think of inheritances. Modern Westerners think of inheritances as shares of a benefactor's estate which one receives after the benefactor is dead and his or her Will is read. A *nachalah*, in contrast, has nothing to do with either benevolence or benefaction; nor does it arise by virtue of anyone's death.

² Nachalah is *nun, chet, lamed, hey*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #5159.

Secondly, a *nachalah* is not a ‘possession’ in the sense modern Westerners think of a possession. In our modern Western world one thinks of a possession as something one has the right to use any way one sees fit. A *nachalah* comes with a laundry list of prescribed conditions of use. Thirdly a *nachalah* is not a ‘heritage’. A heritage is something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor by reason of birth or lineage. A *nachalah* comes through a wholly different source than one’s family tree or physical circumstance.

The Hebrew word *nachal* refers to a brook or river, from its channel outward, not just to its banks but to all its watershed areas and tributaries. See e.g. **Genesis 32:23** [the *nachal* Yabbok, across which Ya’akov took his family before wrestling with the angel of the Holy One] and **Leviticus 23:42** [describing one of the species of trees from which we are take a branch for our lulav as ‘willows of the *nachal*’]. As the state of a brook or river is dependent upon the quality and quantity of the run-off of rainwater from the surrounding hills, so our spiritual state is dependent upon the off-casting of beauty, fruitfulness, fresh revelation, love, joy, and shalom – or the opposite thereof, as the case may be – from whoever and whatever is in our ‘*up-line*’. So who – and what quality of ‘watershed’– is in your ‘upline’? And what kind and quality of watershed are you being for those who happen to be in your ‘*downline*’?

The Holy One wants us to understand the implications of *spiritual watershedding*. So in the final aliyah of this week’s parsha He speaks to us about our uplines and downlines. If one adds the feminine suffix [*hey*] to the end of *nachal* the word becomes *nachalah* – a term firmly rooted in *covenant*. *Nachalah* describes an aspect of *covenant relationship* and *responsibility*. So let us see if we can build a frame of reference. A covenant is, at essence, a *forward-looking relationship agreement, setting out each party’s status and responsibilities vis-à-vis each other, vis-à-vis strangers to the covenant, and vis-à-vis the eretz/land and other physical assets involved*. The stronger covenant partner, called the *suzerain*, commits himself to provide protection, provision, and nurture to the weaker covenant partner, called the *vassal*. The weaker covenant partner commits himself to seek no other protector, provider or nurture, and to do everything the suzerain directs, whenever and however the suzerain directs him to. That is where a *nachalah* comes in. Sometimes a *suzerain* covenants with a *vassal* to conditionally place some item of valuable, potentially fruit or income producing property in the stewardship of the weaker covenant partner for a period of time and under conditions that the *suzerain* sets forth. An incidental benefit may flow to the *vassal*, but the arrangement is primarily for the benefit of the *suzerain*. It is like a franchise. It is all about the expansion of the *suzerain*’s dominion/kingdom and renown/reputation. Think of Messiah’s parables concerning the tenants of the landlord and the talents of the Master. Actual ownership and ultimate right of control whatever item of value a *suzerain* places in the stewardship of his *vassal*

remains at all times the property of the *suzerain*. Title to the *nachalah* never passes. The *suzerain* can take it back any time he wants. At any time, for any reason, he can repossess it and entrust it to someone else - for a season or *forever*.

Even during the season when the *nachalah* is in the vassal's care he cannot treat it as his. It is 'on loan'. It is 'under stewardship'. He cannot do with it whatever he wants. He is responsible - and accountable - to do with the item *what the suzerain authorizes and/or instructs him to do with it, and for the purpose of expansion of the suzerain's realm of dominion and reputation*.

With every *nachalah* comes a high level of accountability to the suzerain. The vassal must recognize the *good and faithful stewardship of any nachalah entrusted to him by the suzerain as an integral part of his Covenant undertaking, subjecting him to possible rewards and promotions on the one hand, and possible discipline and demotion on the other hand*.

The allotment of land that each tribe was assigned was that tribe's *nachalah* from the Holy One. They were not owners - just stewards - of the assigned lands. They could only use the lands assigned to them according to the terms and conditions stipulated by the Holy One as suzerain of the Covenant. Neither the tribe as an entity nor its individual members owned or had rights to alienate any portion of that land. The land remained the Holy One's. Any benefit the tribes or their members received from the entrustment of the land to them as a *nachalah* was purely incidental. The arrangement was intended for the benefit of the Holy One, as a means to expand His realm of dominion and His reputation.

With this background let us look at the distinct *nachalah* that the Holy One, as Suzerain, is placing in the stewardship of the tribe of Levi. Not every *nachalah* – or up-line impact – is material, you see. The most important *nachalot*, in fact, are *relational, servile, and spiritual*.

The Nachalah of Aharon

The Holy One makes it clear to Aharon that, for him and his family, HE – *i.e.* the Creator of the Heavens and the earth - is to be the only 'upline'. Aharon's status and quality of life is not to be dependent upon other men or material things. Aharon's watershed is One Who sits enthroned between the wings of the cherubim, above the mercy seat. That is the only place/person/area to which Aharon is to look for what he needs. The Holy One – the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov – is to be his sole Source and Provider, his sole Delight, His only Teacher/Rabbi/Shepherd, his Sole Counselor, and his exclusive fountain of fruitfulness, revelation, love, joy, energy, passion, wisdom, and *shalom*.

The Special Case Nachalah of the Levi'im

The Holy One also instructed the Levi'im that they would have as a *nachalah* the *tithes* presented by the 12 tribes from the produce of their respective *nachalot/watersheds*. Thus their livelihood would always depend upon the well being (materially and spiritually) of the 12 tribes. And thus they were given a tremendous *built-in incentive to see all of Israel prosper!* Here is how the Holy One explained it to Aharon:

V'livnei Levi hineh natati kol-ma'aser b'Yisra'el l'nachalah

To the sons of Levi, I am now giving all the tithes in Israel as a nachalah

chelef avodatam asher-hem ovdim et-avodat Ohel Mo'ed

This is to facilitate/aid in the work/service they perform in the Communion Tent.

V'avad ha-Levi hu et-avodat Ohel Mo'ed

the Levites are to perform the necessary service in the Communion Tent

v'hem yis'u avonam

and they will bear their guilt/sin

chukat olam l'doroteichem

It is to be an eternal ordinance for future generations

Uvetoch b'nei Yisra'el lo yinchalu nachalah

that [the Levites] are not to have any nachalah of land,

Ki et-ma'aser b'nei-Yisra'el asher yarimu l'Adonai t'rumah

For it is the tithes B'nei Yisrael separate as an elevated gift for the Holy One

natati l'Lvi'im l'nachalah

that I am appointing to the Levites for a nachalah.

The *Levi'im* [Levites] are to go to *Eretz Yisrael* with the rest of the tribes, but in lieu of the responsibility to steward the Holy One's land the *Levi'im* are to get something else – something our English Bibles call '*the tithe*'. For the other tribes the land of Israel is to be their *nachalah* [*i.e.* the portion they receive and are responsible to steward for the Holy One's glory pursuant to Covenant]. The *nachalah* the *Levi'im* are responsible to steward for the Holy One's glory is something very, very perishable. Which brings up the very controversial subject – what is a tithe?

What is a "Tithe"?

Few religious subjects in the Western world – either in Judaism or in Christianity – have been bantered around more than the 'tithe'. For some the *tithe* is the ultimate spiritual *panacea* - the one-size fits all 'cure' for spiritual ills – and the answer to every problem. Just give a *tithe* of your income to their ministry organization – or to their local church or synagogue - they say and *everything will miraculously get better for you*. Just write out a check for a *tithe* of your paycheck – made payable to them of course - and they assure you that the money you give to them will 'open

the windows of Heaven’, and will make whatever mysterious deity they happen to be talking about and calling ‘God’ ‘*pour out a blessing*’ over your life.

For others in the religious world the term ‘tithes’ has become a ‘*shibboleth*’ – a word which when spoken, depending on *how* it is spoken, instantly causes either a *lovefest* or a *religious war*. Be *very, very careful* of both sets of people. Do not judge, condemn, or hate such people. Do not attack them, physically or verbally. Do not declare *rav lachem* to them or shake the dust off your feet on them as you beat a hasty retreat from their ‘tents’. But *be very, very careful of them*. The ‘tithes’ is, you see, one of those subjects of which the mere mention tends to make people forget what is really important and start *straining at gnats* and *swallowing camels*. What is really important, you ask? Here are a few things that are really important. Learning to accept and rejoice in His Love and unshakable goodwill toward us individually and toward mankind collectively – that is really important. Maintaining a state of constant astonishment and thankfulness at the thought of the infinite majesty, mercy, kindness, wisdom and goodness of the Holy One – that is really important. Embracing the Biblical Covenant under which He has promised to be unto us a *Suzerain* and we have agreed to become unto Him as a *Vassal* – that is really important. Loving the Holy One with all one’s heart, with all one’s soul with all one’s strength, and loving one’s neighbor as oneself – that is really important. *Sh’ma*-ing the Voice of the Divine Bridegroom, and *sh’mar*-ing His Covenant, and *asah*-ing His instructions for living in real time - that is really important. Meditating on His Instructions for Living Day and Night, and speaking about them when we sit in our houses and when we walk along the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up – that is really important. Learning from the Holy One, by watching how He works, and following His Lead in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly through life - those are really important. Honoring our father and mother, and caring for and ministering to the needs of the widows and orphans and the poor and the foreigner in our communities – those are really important.

Training up your children to keep the way of the Holy One and to do righteousness and justice in all one’s interpersonal dealings – that is really important. Remembering/commemorating the Sabbath and maintaining/protecting its holiness – those are really important. Fleeing sensual indulgences, and rejecting opportunities for unjust gain, and speaking the truth in love rather than engaging in accusation, condemnation, and *lashon ha-ra*, and being thankful and grateful for what we have rather than coveting what someone else has – those are really important. But *getting everything right about the tithes*? Well, let’s just say *that is way, way, way down the Holy One’s priority list*. Is that understood? Good. With our priorities firmly in place, now we can proceed to talk a little about the ‘tithes’

without all the fanfare, manipulation, hype, and hysterics.

De-Mystifying the Tithe

These days everyone seems to have an opinion on what a ‘*tithe*’ consists of and how it should fit into their framework of theology. Everyone is *wise in his [or her] own eyes* with regard to this subject. For all the bantering and chest-beating being done about the tithe in the halls of religion, however, do we today, in the 21st Century world, two millennia removed from a functioning Temple in Jerusalem, *really* even have the necessary framework to be able to understand what a tithe is?

Do we really know *what the Bible really says* about the tithe? Do we really have a *clue* how the ‘tithe’ fits into the Divine Plan of Redemption for mankind? Do we really, really, REALLY understand what the ‘tithe’ is about? The word our English Bibles translate as *tithe* in this passage is *ma’aser*³. It is formed by adding the prefix *mem* [making the “m” sound] to the Hebrew verb *asar*⁴. The most foundational verb form of this word means *to become rich, or to attain a wealthy status*. The word is also related to the Hebrew word *eser*, meaning to take a prescribed portion out of a larger whole. From this *eser* came to mean *to carve out or set aside, for a special purpose, a portion of something that constitutes one’s wealth*. *Ma’aser* [literally meaning *of the carved-out portion of wealth*] came to be the term used to describe any *portion of one’s wealth* a person has set aside for a special purpose.

Eser = The Hebrew Number 10⁵

Eser is now often used as a Hebrew word⁶ referring to the number 10. How did the linguistic leap occur between *attaining wealth/riches, carving out a portion, and the number 10*? It doesn’t seem to follow. What does wealth/riches have to do with the number 10? Let’s think about that. Ten is often identified as the number of *completion*. Ten is all the digits the numbering system possesses. Since 10 completes the cycle of integers [whole numbers, i.e. 1-9], and begins an altogether new series of numbers [i.e. 11 –19], it has been said to signify *the perfection of Divine order*. When you have 10 of anything therefore you have *the seeds of a new order*. Consider the Biblical usages of the number 10. Ten is more than a number in Torah – it is a *prophetic declaration* of a transition from an old to a new order. For instance:

³ *Ma’aser* is spelled. *mem, ayin, shin, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4643, it is pronounced *mah-aws-ayr’*

⁴ *Asar* is spelled *ayin, shin, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #6238 and/or Strong’s Hebrew word #6240, it is pronounced *aw-shawr’* or *aw-sawr’*

⁵ In Hebrew each letter of the *alef-beit* has a corresponding number value. The letter assigned the number value of 10 is the *yod*.

⁶ In Hebrew numbers assume the gender of the thing being numbered. If the thing being numbered is masculine, the masculine form of the number is used. If the thing being numbered is feminine, the feminine form of the number is used. *Eser* is the masculine form of ten.

1. With *10 verbal messages* the Holy One created the Heavens and the earth [i.e. the phrase "*And Elohim said*" is repeated 10 times in the Creation story presented in Genesis].
2. Noach's generation, which was separated out from all others for judgment [and a prophetic form of redemption], was the *10th generation* after Adam and Chava [Eve]; likewise Avraham's generation was the 10th from Noach.
3. There are *10 nations* mentioned in Genesis 15:19 as nations which the Holy One will cause the descendants of Avraham to dispossess [consider, in this regard, the *10 toes of the image* in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the *10 horns of the final beast* in Daniel's vision; consider also that *10 men from every nation* are said to take hold of the garment of one Jew in the day of restoration].
4. There are *10 'tests' or 'trials'* involved in the Holy One's dealings with Avraham⁷.
5. The *10th day of the month of Nisan* was the day *Yisrael was to cut out a lamb to be used as a korban Pesach [Passover sacrifice]*.
6. The Holy One performed *10 'signs'* [the so-called 'plagues'] to accomplish the redemption of His people from bondage.
7. The Holy One separated *10 instructions from His Torah* – the *Aseret Ha-Dibrot* to speak in the hearing of all those gathered on Mount Sinai.
8. The *10th day of Tishri* (the 7th month of the Biblical year as described in Exodus 12) is designated as the Day of Atonement.
9. There were *10 'spies' who made a negative report* about the land and thereby brought judgment on an entire generation.
10. There were *10 tribes 'lost'* – actually sown as seeds into the nations - at the time of the Assyrian conquest.

The number ten is therefore the symbol of supernatural intervention in man's affairs. Let me say that again – the number ten is the symbol of SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION IN MAN'S AFFAIRS.

The Prophetic Pronouncement Inherent in the Act of Separating Out A Tithe

The act of separating a tenth of one's wealth is thus an acknowledgement by the

⁷ These 10 tests or trials are as follows:

1. The requirement that he go out from Charan and all his father's house.
2. The famine experienced upon his arrival in Kena'an.
3. The seizure of Sarah by Pharaoh.
4. The war to rescue Lot.
5. The relationship with Hagar.
6. His circumcision.
7. The seizure of Sarah by Avimelech of Gezar.
8. The events surrounding Hagar's conflict with Sarah and attempted flight.
9. The events surrounding the expulsion of Hagar and Yish'mael.
10. The events surrounding the binding of *Yitzhak* [Isaac] on Mount Moriah.

man doing the separating that the acquisition of his worldly possessions has not come about by natural means, but *has come about instead by reason of the supernatural intervention of the Holy One*. In Hebrew therefore the number 10 is expressed by the letter *yod*, a picture of *a hand reaching downward from Heaven*. Every *yod* has a numerical value of 10.

To acknowledge that everything we have is the result of His supernatural intervention on our behalf the Divine Bridegroom called upon His Betrothed to always set aside a *tithe* – a tenth part – of the wealth He showered upon her in abundance in the land flowing with milk and honey. Each tenth part was itself not simply a testimony of a past intervention by the Holy One in the affairs of the man, but was *a seed of the next generation of wealth* that the Holy One would send the man's way. But wait – was it just one tithe [one 'tenth part'] we were to set aside? Or was it two 'tenth parts' (20%)? Or perhaps was it three tenth parts (30%)? Inquiring minds want to know, right?

Exactly How Many Tithes Does Torah Really Tell Us To Separate?

If you read very far into Torah you will realize that Numbers 18 is not the only time the Holy One brings up the subject of the separation of the *ma'aser* [tithe]. The Holy One also instructs us concerning the *ma'aser* in Leviticus 27 and again in Deuteronomy 12 and 14. The issue, of course, is whether the multiple references made by the Holy One to the separation of the *ma'aser* [tithe] refer to the *same* 1/10th of one's wealth – or to totally different 1/10th segments of it. In other words, the *question is* whether the Holy One calling us to set apart 1/10th of our wealth to a special purpose – or is He really calling us to divide up our wealth into ten parts, and then set apart a 1/10th portion of the whole for one purpose, a second 1/10th portion of the whole for another purpose, and so on?

Not surprisingly, if you read the tomes written by Jewish and Christian religious institutional leaders about 'the tithe' you will quickly be confronted with the view that actually, since the Holy One mentioned the 'tithe' more than once in Torah, the Holy One really was instructing us to separate out from the produce that He entrusts to us not just one tithe, but at least two - i.e. two tenths of our produce. These writers, not without some significant conflict of interest, conclude that people should set aside at least two separate 1/10th portions of their produce [i.e. 20 %], with one complete 1/10th to be given to ... well, uh – TO THEM. According to this convenient '*multiple tithe*' interpretation of the Torah's multiple *ma'aser* instructions what the Holy One must have intended was to instruct us to set aside 1/10th of what the land the Holy One gave us produces [called *ma'aser rishon*, the 'first

tithe'] to support the Levi'im [Levites]⁸. Then, using the same interpretive reasoning, say these interpreters, the Holy One must have intended for us to set aside yet another 1/10th of the produce of our lands to fund our attendance at the *sh'losh regalim* [i.e. the 3 pilgrimage feasts, i.e. *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*⁹ [see Deuteronomy 14]. Under that reasoning a *second tithe* was to be separated out from our annual produce to provide for the poor, the foreigner/sojourner, the widow, the fatherless, and the Levite dwelling in our hometowns.

Such theologies tend to speak of the tithe mentioned in Numbers 18 [today's aliyah from parsha *Korach*] as *Ma'aser Rishon* [the 'First Tithe'] and to speak of the tithe mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:23-27 [from parsha *Re'eh*] as *Ma'aser Sheni* [the 'Second Tithe']. Some even go so far as to speak of the tithe mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:28-29 as *Ma'aser Sh'lishi* [the 'Third Tithe']. Were you to follow this line of interpretation then not just 10% but at least 20% - and perhaps as much as 30% - of the wealth-production/accumulation the Holy One provided each year would need to be 'set aside' for the purposes specified. But does this make sense? We do not assume, merely because the Holy One spoke of the *mo'ed* of *Shavuot* [Pentecost] more than once in Torah, that we are actually to celebrate *that feast day* more than once each year, do we?

Let's try to look at this whole subject from the Holy One's perspective. First of all, Moshe poignantly instructs us in parsha *Ekev* as follows:

***Remember the Holy One your God,
for it is He who gives you koach l'asot chayil [power to make wealth]
that He may establish His covenant that He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.***
[Deuteronomy 8:18]

Years ago a Wall-Street investment firm ran a commercial on television with a distinguished gentleman of years, looking very successful, staring into the camera and saying: "*I got my money the old-fashioned way – I EARNED it!*" That is indeed the way the world looks at things. But the slogan ignores spiritual reality. Spiritual reality is that no matter how hard you or I work we can never 'earn' anything – even our daily bread. All bread, all food, all possessions, are *gifts of the Holy One*. They are His to possess, and His to distribute. He doles them out as He sees fit. As Moshe points out however, the Holy One does give to His covenant people *something very special* – something the Hebrew text calls *koach l'asot chayil*. This phrase translates into English something like *power to make wealth*¹⁰. *Koach l'asot*

⁸ A cynic might query whether that understanding might, in part, explain why replacement-theology Christian religious leaders have historically been so adamant about identifying themselves as the Holy One's new 'Levites' - to justify their taking of a 'tithe' from their congregations/parishioners].

⁹ And thereby to support the economy of Jerusalem.

¹⁰ The word here translated as wealth is *chayil*, *chet*, *yod*, *lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #2428, pronounced *khah-yeel*'. It can also be translated as 'value', 'industry', or 'hard work', or even 'strength'.

chayil [power to make wealth] is an intrinsic part of the Holy One's plan to allow the successors of Avraham in the covenant to partner with Him in 'co-creation'.

The Hebrew word *koach* is first encountered in parsha *B'reshit*, in connection with the Holy One's dealings with *Kayin* [Cain]. After Kayin slew his brother *Hevel* [Abel], the Holy One said to Kayin:

**... The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.
So now you are cursed from the earth,
which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
When you till the ground, it will no longer yield its koach to you ...**

[Genesis 4:10(b)-12(a)]

Because of the innocent blood Kayin spilled [*i.e.* the blood of his brother Hevel] the Holy One said that the ground would no longer yield its *koach* [its highest and best produce] to Kayin, no matter how hard Kayin worked or how much he sweated. This is a 'curse'.

The word here translated as wealth is *chayil*. It can also be translated as 'value', 'industry', or 'hard work', or even 'strength'.

What Were the Levi'im Obligated by Covenant to Do with the Nachalah of Tithes They Received?

Keep in mind *the law of context* Beloved. Remember that the brief reference to the tithe that is contained in today's aliyah is present solely because the topic under discussion by the Holy One is *the tribe of Levi*. The real issue on which the Divine Bridegroom is wanting to communicate with us had very little to do with the quantity of the tithe but a lot to do with *what was to become of the tribe of Levi in light of the rebellion of Korach*.

The Holy One had already let us know that unlike the other tribes the natural descendants of Levi were not going to receive a tribal allotment in *Eretz Yisrael* to steward. The Levi'im were instead to assist the house of Aharon [*i.e.* the priestly family] in performing menial, but necessary, tasks in the *Mish'kan*. Instead of receiving the *koach* [strength] of the land of Eretz Yisrael by the usual method of sowing and reaping the Levites were to receive it in the form of tithes brought to them by the heads of households among the tribes who *did* have a tribal allotment. Please note however that the Levi'im were not by any means to have unrestricted use of the 'tithes' that were brought by the other tribes. The tithes were a *nachalah*, not a possession. They were for the Holy One's glory, not for the Levi'im's enrichment, comfort, or pleasure. In acknowledgement of this the Levi'im were instructed to present to Aharon and his sons [against whom they had only recently rebelled], from the tithes they received from the members of the other tribes of Israel

something calls a *ma'aser min ha-ma'aser* [i.e. a tithe from among a tithe]. Indeed the Holy One instructed Aharon to tell that this *ma'aser min ha-ma'aser* had to come from the very best of the produce that the Levi'im received on the Holy One's behalf from their brethren. And even after the Levi'im gave to Aharon the *ma'aser min ha-ma'aser* from the tithes they received they could still not do with them as they saw fit. They had to be used and disposed of in accordance with the Holy One's instructions.

***But What About the “Tithe” Today –With No Temple,
No Functioning Priesthood, and a Non-Agricultural Economy?***

Today there is a ton of debate and argument in the competing camps of organized religion concerning the responsibility of New Creations in Messiah Yeshua to - or not to - “tithe”. The reality is that this debate rages only because we have been divorced from and do not know and understand Torah. We therefore owe it to ourselves to go back to the source material – the Holy One's specific instructions – to see, in context, what He says about the “tithe”, and to consider how those instructions can be applied by us today.

Torah never tells us to “tithe” to a local church or to a synagogue or to a ‘ministry’. It also never tells us to bring a tithe to any place except the brazen altar of the *Mish'kan* or Temple in Jerusalem. Neither did any prophet tell us to do either of these things. Neither did Yeshua of Natzret. Never. Not even once. Look it up. Take your time. Be very, very thorough. You will not find even the slightest suggestion from Yeshua that tithes should or could be paid *to a local church, to a synagogue, to any public or private ministry, or to any charitable organization*. And neither was tithing to a local church, synagogue, ministry or charity, a part of the teaching of any writer or anointed messenger in the apostolic canon.

Consider that not one of the apostles or disciples of Yeshua ever uttered one word suggesting that a tithe should be paid – or even *could* be paid - to a local church or synagogue or any ministry or ministry organization. Can you *believe* it? This is *scandalous!* How could the Holy One, Messiah, and every single one of Messiah's apostles have possibly forgotten to tell us what modern preachers wanting our money to fund their ministries and/or lavish lifestyles absolutely insist is such an important spiritual ‘principle’? How could Yeshua – and every single one of His apostles and chosen scribes of Holy Writ – have *missed this?* Maybe He ... uh ... they ... *did NOT miss this after all*. Maybe Yeshua and the apostles He trained thoroughly in how to deal with real people in real life situations in real time knew something that modern preachers and rabbis with programs to run, bills to pay, and fancy buildings to construct, maintain, and decorate do not want to consider. And maybe, just *maybe*, *WE are the ones who have missed the point on this whole*

‘tithing’ concept.

What Torah actually says about ‘tithing’ is that when we are [1] *in possession of the land of Israel*, [2] *living in tribal allotments*, [3] *enjoying the Holy One’s supernatural blessings upon the land* because we are [4] *functioning as the kingdom of priests we were created to be*. It is only in that situation and under those circumstances that every tenth domestic animal of our herds and flocks that passes ‘under the rod’ [*i.e.* is counted at counting time, after the reproductive season] is “holy unto the Holy One”¹¹. In that situation and under those circumstances, a ‘tithe’ of everything the land of Israel has produced for us, “whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree”, belongs to and is holy to the Holy One.¹² Torah also tells us that when we harvest from *Eretz Yisrael* wheat, grapes, or olives, we are to set aside, as holy, the tenth part of our wheat crop, our vineyard, and our olive orchard¹³.

Moreover, even with regard to people living in the Land of Israel the Torah describes the *tithe-presentation* – the physical giving and entrusting of physical possession of the tithe to another human being – as something completely inseparable from the Aharonic priesthood and the *Mish’kan*. If there is no *Mish’kan* [and there has not been one since 70 C.E., when Titus of Rome destroyed the Temple], then, *there can be no Biblical tithe-presentation*.

Why is the existence of the *Mish’kan* or Temple an essential prerequisite to tithing? Because absent a *Mish’kan* or Temple there is *neither a Biblical place to present the tithe*¹⁴ nor a *Biblical person or group to present it to*¹⁵. Since 70 C.E. we have only one functioning Priest (the risen, ascended, Messiah Yeshua), and only one functioning altar (the Mercy Seat upon which Messiah Yeshua has sprinkled His own blood in atonement for our sins). Both are in Heaven, not on earth. There is no *Mish’kan*, no earthly priesthood capable of receiving and processing tithes on the Holy One’s behalf in any meaningful covenant sense. Nor are there any functioning Levi’im.

To surrender a “tithe” of that which the Holy One places in your hands to someone who is not a Biblical Priest – that is, one who is a priest after the order of either

¹¹ Leviticus 27:32.

¹² Leviticus 27:30.

¹³ See Deuteronomy 12:17 and Deuteronomy 14:23.

¹⁴ See Deuteronomy 12:11, which tells us that “there will be a place” where the Holy One chooses to place His Name –and that it is there [Jerusalem, at the Temple on Mount Moryah] *and only there* that we are to present our *ma’aser* [tithes], our firstborn, and *korbanot*.

¹⁵ Numbers 18 makes it clear the tithes are to be presented *to the Holy One* – but does not explain where, when, or how. This detail is filled in by Deuteronomy 14.

Melchi-Tzedek or Aharon - is not only not required, it is expressly *forbidden*¹⁶ by Torah. For anyone who is not functioning as a part of the Aharonic priesthood in connection with the *Mish'kan* to ask for or receive something designated as a tithe – which is to be dedicated wholly to the Holy One – replicates the rebellion of Korach, who insisted he, and others in the Community could, just like Aharon, function as Priests via accepting offerings and burning incense. Receiving tithes from the Holy One's people thus constitutes either taxation (if done under compulsion or coercion) or idol worship (if done voluntarily).

But ... Didn't the Patriarchs Give a Tithe Before the Mish'kan?

Some argue – “*but Abraham gave tithes to a person other than an Aharonic priest, and Jacob vowed to give tithes from all he acquired, long before the Mish'kan was built.*” True. But let's look at those transactions more closely. Our father Avraham is said in Genesis 14 to have presented to Melchi-Tzedek a tithe of the spoils of his supernatural warfare with the four kings of Mesopotamia¹⁷. But note the following about that.

1. Avraham was never told to do this by the Holy One; he did it on his own notion, acting in a prophetic mode, foreseeing the priesthood of Messiah.
2. This was something our ancestor apparently did only once in his entire life – and then only at the conclusion of a supernatural war in the course of which he was supernaturally enabled to acquire wealth he could not have acquired by natural means common to his occupation as a shepherd.
3. Though Avraham was, all his life, a shepherd, with many herds and flocks, and though he lived many, many years in proximity to Melchi-Tzedek, we are never told that he ever tithed either from his herds or from his flocks.
4. Consider the place - Melchi-Tzedek was *the King of the city that would become Jerusalem* [which was to become the resting place for the *Mish'kan*].
5. Melchi-Tzedek was *the priest of the Most High God*”.

After he awoke from the famous ‘Jacob’s Ladder’ dream our ancestor Ya’akov made a vow that of all the Holy One would give him he would give a tenth¹⁸. But consider the following about that instance.

1. Ya’akov specifically tied the tithe he promised to give to *the house of God He would build at the place where he made the vow* – the site of the Temple, on Mount Moriyah [according to ancient interpretation].
2. During Ya’akov’s life, we are never told he gave the tithes he had

¹⁶ See Deuteronomy 12:5-8, 10-14, for the express prohibition on presenting tithes as well as *korbanot* at any place other than at the brazen altar of the *Mish'kan* (later, the Temple).

¹⁷ Genesis 14:18-20; see also Hebrews 7:6-9, for an apostolic commentary on the account presented in Torah of this event.

¹⁸ Genesis 28:22.

promised to give to the Holy One to any human being. It thus appears he made the vow on behalf of his descendants, who would, upon return to the land of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, give tithes to the Holy One via the Aharonic priests according to Torah.

When viewed in context therefore the specific history of the “tithes” of our patriarchs only confirms that tithes are solely *for the Mish'kan*.

Why Is the Tithe-Presentation Inseparable from the Mish'kan?

When the *Mish'kan* was operational the Holy One instructed us to bring a tenth of all the fruit and increase of the Land that He gave over into our hand to Aharon and his sons¹⁹. Why? Because Aharon and his sons were the designated “Friends of the Bride” during the early stages of our betrothal. Their receipt of the love gifts we brought to our Beloved was symbolic of His acceptance of us, and His welcoming us into the *Mish'kan* – which served as His special chamber for supervised, chaperoned meetings between Him [the Betrothed Bridegroom] and us [the Betrothed Bride]. All of this was in response to our cry on Mount Sinai for an intermediary – someone to act as a “go between” in relation to interaction with the Holy One, during the period of our betrothal. We were at that time completely overwhelmed by the power and majesty of His Voice, and we shied away from intimate, one-on-one visitation with Him. Always the “gentleman”, the Holy One acceded to our wishes and agreed, until we overcame our childish immaturity, to meet with us only in the *Mish'kan*, and only through the Aharonic Priesthood.

Even the most explicit instructions concerning tithe-presentation given in Torah, in Deuteronomy 14:23-29, assume the existence of an earthly *Mish'kan*, a functioning Aharonic priesthood, and a community of Levi'im who tend the *Mish'kan*, and serve Aharon and his sons, and can own no property in Israel. Be very cautious therefore concerning any teaching equating the giving of the “tithe” of your income to a church, synagogue, or other person, organization or ministry today with the giving of the “tithe” of the fruit of the Land of Israel to the sons of Aharon and/or their servants the Levi'im in connection with the part they played in the Divine Drama of the *Mish'kan*. And please note that in Deuteronomy 12:5-8, 10-14 the Torah *expressly prohibits* presenting tithes [or *korbanot*, for that matter] at any place other than at the *Mish'kan*. Any place. So if/when you give money or property or volunteer to serve at a local assembly or to a charitable organization, just understand that what you are giving is a *donation* – designed to help that assembly or organization pay utility bills, pay salaries, operate benevolences, and provide inspiration. If Spirit-led, may such donations proliferate for the sake of humanity, and may they all be put to an honorable use by honorable men, and

¹⁹ Numbers 18:21, 24.

thereby become a blessing to many. But let's be honest about *what they are not* – and they are most definitely *not* the tithes described in the Torah.

Financial Contributions to Charities, Churches, Synagogues, and Ministries

Please understand that the author of these studies is by no means saying that *donating money*, in whatever amounts (as opposed to “tithing”) to a community chest, a charity, or a “local church” organization, a synagogue, or “ministry” is wrong or constitutes idolatry. Giving donations *could be* wrong or idolatrous, of course, *depending on the reasons pursuant to which you are donating the money*. If your whole focus is ‘giving to get’, as opposed to ‘giving to bless’, for instance, what you are doing is nothing short of practicing *spiritual witchcraft*. So before you give money any church, synagogue, ministry or charitable organization, please just take a moment and ask the Holy One to reveal to you *what your motivation for doing so really is*. Giving decisions should be all about surrendering to His Will and His Glory and His strategies – not selfishly *giving to get*. Remember, the Torah is *alive, active*, and more powerful than a two-edged sword. Remember that it *penetrates even to the dividing of joint and marrow, soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*. Let Torah’s teachings penetrate to the discerning of what truly motivates you. Let the Holy One search your heart.

If you find yourself being called upon to donate money to a church, synagogue, ministry, or charitable organization - or if you regularly do so out of custom - here are some questions you might want to ask yourself:

Question #1: Did the Holy One *specifically tell you* to make the donation? [i.e. are you *sh'ma*-ing the Voice of the Most High, or are you following the way that ‘seems right to man’]

Question #2: Are you donating [or considering donating] in order to “unlock the windows of heaven” - *to get a blessing in return* [i.e. are you giving to get]?

Question #3: Are donating [or considering donating] out of a desire *to bless those who teach you about the Bible*?

Question #4: Do you give [or are you considering donating] *to provide a livelihood to a particular minister or ministry*?

Question #5: Do you give [or are you considering donating] *to bless the poor or needy through a community effort*?

Question #6: Do you give offerings [or are you considering donating] in order *to be recognized (or consider yourself) as a generous person*?

Question #7: Do you give [or are you considering donating] in order *to become or remain a leader* in the organization?

Question #8: Do you give [or are you considering donating] *to please or curry favor with the pastor or rabbi?*

Question #9: Do you feel you have to give money to the organization in order *to be given a leadership position, or to have your voice heard on congregational matters?*

Question #10: Do you give [or are you considering donating] hoping *to “pacify” God, or to ease your conscience, or to feel good about yourself?*

A More Excellent Way - Tzedakah

We are instructed over and over – in Torah as well as in the apostolic writings of the talmidim of Messiah - that it is a part of the Holy One’s divine plan for us that we give *tzedakah* to the poor in our communities and care for the needs of the fatherless, the widow, and the foreigner who live among us. Traditionally the Hebrew word *tzedakah* has been translated into English as “righteousness”. Due, however, to the Torah and the prophets’ persistent equation of righteousness with caring for others *tzedakah* has come to be a shorthand way of saying “charity” or “almsgiving” – i.e. gifts to the poor and needy in our community. While the term is sometimes loosely used to include *institutional giving*, true Biblical *tzedakah* is administered personally, one on one, and if possible anonymously. It is not left up to administrators or bureaucrats to dole out according to institutionalized criteria. Institutional giving is another creature altogether from Biblical *tzedakah*. Institutional giving is touted by those seeking our money as a ‘religious obligation’ or ‘duty’. *Tzedakah* on the other hand is *a part of who we are, is our God-given privilege*, and be a source of great pleasure.

So, What Exactly DID the Holy One Tell Us To Do With the Tithed Portion of the Land’s Produce?

Let us imagine for an instant that we live in *Eretz Yisrael*. Imagine further the Temple is standing on Mount Moriyah and true sons of Aharon and Levi’im are engaged in priestly duties there. [May it come to pass quickly in our day!] What under such circumstances would we do with the “tithed” portion of the land’s produce? We know the tithed portion is “holy”. We know it is “the Holy One’s”. We know the Levi’im – if they own no land and spend their life in the Temple assisting the Kohanim [priests] - has rights of some kind in it. So what exactly do we DO with the tenth part of our produce, or herd, or flock? How do we physically accomplish the *mitzvah*? Torah tells us. In Deuteronomy 14, as we were preparing to enter the land of promise the Holy One got specific, and told us specifically what we were to do with the “tithed” part of the land’s produce. He established for us a *three-year cycle* in relation thereto. In the first two years out of every three-year cycle, this is how He told us we were to deal with the “holy”, “tithed” portion of the produce of *Eretz Yisrael*:

You are to eat²⁰ the tithe of your grain, of your new wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock, before the Holy One your God, in the place which he will choose to cause his name to dwell there; that you may learn to fear the Holy One your God always.

If the way be too long for you, so that you are not able to carry it,

then turn it [the portion set aside as a tithe] into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Holy One your God are to choose.

And, when you are there [in Jerusalem] spend the money for whatever your soul desires, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatever your soul asks of you; and eat there before the Holy One your God, and rejoice, you and your household.

The Levite who is within your gates, you are to not forsake him; for he has no portion nor inheritance with you.

[Deuteronomy 14:23-27]

Did you *catch all that*? I suggest you go back and read it again - and again – until it soaks in. I doubt you have heard that particular instruction of the Holy One read at ‘offering’ time. What Torah says we are to do with the “tithe” is nothing like we have been taught or told! Torah says that, in 2 out of every 3 years, we are to take our “tithe” [or its value in money] **to Jerusalem** and *eat it with rejoicing, celebrating with all members of our households the Holy One’s blessing upon our lives*. In the course of making the pilgrimage, contributing lavishly to the economy of the holy city, and thoroughly enjoying ourselves, Torah says we will **“learn to fear the Holy One our God always.”** Isn’t that interesting. Sounds *radical*, doesn’t it? Torah does not stop there, however. The Holy One goes on to tell us what to do with the “tithe” of all things Eretz Yisrael produces for us every *third year*:

At the end of every three years you are to bring forth all the tithe of your increase in the same year, and lay it up within your gates: and the Levi, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the foreigner living among you, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your gates, are to come, and are to eat and be satisfied; that the Holy One your God may bless you in all the work of your hand that you do.

[Deuteronomy 14:28-29]

So every *third year* in a three-year cycle we are to save up the tithe portion of our grain harvest at a place “within our gates” where four specific disadvantaged

²⁰ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as “eat” in this verse is *alef, kaf, lamed*, Strong’s Hebrew word # 398 '*akal*, pronounced *aw-kal*'. This is the verb used in Genesis 2:16, when the Holy One told Adam and Chava, in the garden, before the Fall: “*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat [‘akal]; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are to not eat [‘akal] of it: for in the day that you eat [‘akal] of it you will surely die.*”

groups - the Levi'im, the foreigner in our midst, the fatherless, and the widow, can come and take of it what they need to survive. This is the “storehouse” mentioned in Malachi 3:10. It is not a “local church” or synagogue. It is a type of “community chest”. Like the “corner of the field” the tithe of our land’s produce in every third year is to be made available for all in need. And we get to participate in it. It is part of our stewardship of the holy land.

Alas we are only imagining. I live in the *Diaspora*. So do most of you. The orchards and fields and hillsides of Eretz Yisrael are producing their bounty for *someone else* this year. Moreover, even if I could make aliyah today, there is no Temple (only a portion of an ancient retaining wall), and there is no *mizbeach* [altar]. There is no priest or Levi to which I could present myself and my tithe, with whom I could celebrate. So for me the *mitzvah* of the tithe – now that I am finally coming to understand it - awaits a future day. In the meantime I look around for opportunities for *tzedakah* – the Holy One’s *more excellent way*.

Questions For Further Study

1. Let’s look a little deeper into today’s concluding verses of parsha *Korach*:

[A] Why were Aharon’s sons and descendants (the Kohanim) to have no *inheritance* in the Land of Israel?

[B] What was to be the inheritance of the Kohanim? What do you think this means?

[C] What was to be the inheritance of the Levi'im?

[D] What responsibility did the Holy One give the Levi'im in verses 22-23.

[E] Who could and could not go near the Tent of Meeting? Why?

[F] What were the tithes of the Israelites to be used for?

[G] What kinds of conduct on the part of Levi'im do you think would “defile” the offerings of the people (as mentioned in verse 32)?

2. In today’s aliyah from the prophets Sh'muel [Samuel] responds to the cry of the people that he pray for them once they realized that their clamor for a king - their desire to get their security from a human ruler - was in essence a rejection of the Holy One. **I Samuel 12:20-22**. Samuel gladly prayed for them. But first he warned them of two very real dangers that come with the “security” afforded by a civil government - turning away from the Holy One and His Torah, and turning to “idols”

[A] Why do you think having a strong civil government tends to cause people to “turn away” from the Holy One?

[B] Why do you think having a strong civil government tends to cause people to turn to “idols”?

[C] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the word translated as “idols” in verse

21. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[D] In verse 22 (the concluding verse of the aliyah) what promise does Samuel make to the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov?

[E] Why does Samuel say the Holy One will not reject the people (even though they have sinned by asking for a king)?

3. In today's B'rit Chadasha aliyah Shaul of Tarsus speaks on a subject that causes the flesh to flinch immediately - the requirement that we pay taxes to the governmental systems of our countries of exile.

*For this reason you also pay taxes,
for they are ministers of the Holy One's service, attending continually on this very thing.
Give therefore to everyone what you owe: taxes to whom taxes are due;
customs to whom customs; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.*

[Romans 13:6-7]

It is and has been since civil governments were instituted a fact of life that with the benefits of organized society (military and police protection, roads, fire protection, and disaster relief) come TAXES. For a person whose primary allegiance is to, and whose primary reliance is upon, the Holy One, not the civil government of the land, the question arises - should we pay taxes? Yeshua was asked this specific question – See Luke 20:20-25. And when Yeshua was asked this question, the taxing authority [Rome] was an “occupation army” of the Emperor, who was imposing his/its law on the Holy One's people against their will. His response was to say: ***Render to the Emperor what is the Emperor's; and give to the Holy One what belongs to the Holy One.***

Since Shaul has been discussing government in this week's aliyah, his attention inevitably turns to the taxes that come with the government. He explains why a New Creation in Messiah Yeshua must not only give the government taxes, but go above and beyond that requirement and give something much more challenging - after all, we should be *k'doshim*!

[A] What two things besides taxes does Shaul say New Creations in Messiah Yeshua should give to governmental leaders?

[B] Under what circumstances, in your opinion, if any, are New Creations in Yeshua not to obey and honor civil authorities? [Before answering, consider Daniel's relationship with the King of Babylon, and his response to some of his decrees. Consider this in light of Ecclesiastes 8:2-9.]

*May you be satisfied with nothing but the truth;
may you be generous toward the poor and the fatherless, the widow and the weary sojourner;
and may your attitude and your actions toward leaders bring honor to the Holy One.*

Shabbat Shalom, Beloved!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Friday's Study

Psalm 10:12-18

Arise, O Holy One! God, lift up your hand! Don't forget the helpless.

Why does the wicked condemn the Holy One

And say in his heart, "God won't call me into account?"

But you do see trouble and grief;

You consider it to take it into your hand.

You help the victim and the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked.

As for the evil man, seek out his wickedness until you find none.

The Holy One is King forever and ever!

The nations will perish out of his land.

O Holy One, you have heard the desire of the humble.

You will prepare their heart. You will cause your ear to hear,

To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,

that man who is of the eretz may terrify no more.