

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Re'eh:*** **Deuteronomy 15:1-23**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 55:1-3**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I John 4:4**

You are not to harden your heart, nor shut your hand ...

[Deuteronomy 15:7]

Today's Meditation is Psalms 113:6-9, and 140:12-13;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the First Petition, *Da'at* [*The Prayer for Knowledge*]

Miketz sheva-shanim – *At the end/break point of seven years ...* ***ta'aseh shmitah*** – *you are to make sh'mittah [i.e. suspension of labor; remittance of debts; and release of indentured servants]. Deuteronomy 15:1.*

Heaven's briefing on how to build and run a Kingdom-of-Heaven Scented Society is in progress. In a Kingdom-of-Heaven Scented Society the key to finding *tzedekah* is not to 'follow the money' – it is to *follow the widows, the fatherless, the poor, the foreigner, and the Levite*. As the *shalom*, the rest, and the hope of the 'least of these, my brethren'² goes, you see, will always, inevitably go our shalom, rest, and hope – and that of our nation.

The next item on Moshe's agenda is the unveiling of the Holy One's radical plan to care for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized folk He brings our way. We must not follow the folly of the nations who try to 'fix' poverty, economic inequality, or social injustice in ways by clothing government workers with the power to play Robin Hood. We must also not count on charitable organizations formed and operated by the world's standards to administer benevolence. We are never to fool ourselves into thinking that we are going to correct perceived societal wrongs by organizing riots, engaging in angry rhetoric, or chanting inflammatory 'social justice' slogans. For us, giving the disadvantaged a 'hand-up' and a 'way out' needs to be PRIVATE, PERSONAL matter of the heart. It is part of being a natural outgrowth of covenantal love – done as quietly as possible.

Re-Energizing the Nation – The Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society's Radical Seventh and Fiftieth Year Reset Protocols

After we enter into and possess the land, we are to consider each year we live as merely a component part of the Holy One's covenant-based redemption and

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² See Matthew 25:31-45, where the Master announces the treatment of the 'least of these my brethren' as the yardstick by which the destiny of men and nations will be adjudicated.

restoration cycle. Reminding us of the ‘*When You Enter the Land*’ Discourse of parsha *B’har* [see **Leviticus 25**], Moshe reminds us that the Holy One’s instructions for us include following a seven-year restart cycle as a testimonial to our King’s goodness and mercy:

V’zeh devar ha-sh’midah shamot

And this is the prophetic wisdom download of the sh’mittah:

kol-ba'al masheh yado asher yasheh bere'eihu

Every master of lending who has lent anything to his neighbor is to forgive/release the debt.

lo yigos et-re'eihu v'et-achiv

He is not to require the return of his property

ki-kara sh’midah l'Adonai

For he is to declare/testify of the Holy One’s sh’midah/forgiveness/resetting.

[Deuteronomy 15:2]

Moshe wants us to know, and always keep in the forefront of our minds, that the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov [a] cares for the poor and disadvantaged; [b] is all into and about open opportunities of forgiveness; and [c] wants His People to keep short accounts. If we, His Partners in Covenant, are going to be holy as He is holy, and co-labor with Him in His Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration, we will need to learn to *care for the poor and disadvantaged among us*, learn to *be all into and about open opportunities for forgiveness*, and *make it a priority to keep short accounts* as well. It is an essential component of His Grand and Glorious Redemptive Plan.

The Greater Vision of Which The Periodic ‘Reset’ Protocols Are An Essential Component: The Holy One’s Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration for All His Creation

The Friend of the Bridegroom in the Greatest Betrothal known to man is unveiling one of the most important strategies of the Bridegroom’s *Grand Plan of Redemption for Mankind and Restoration to Creation*. We are slowly beginning to ‘get’ the fact that the Covenant is about a whole lot more than our personal – or even our national - salvation, deliverance, and blessing. We are finally beginning to *re’eh* [i.e. behold the essence and reality of] that the Holy One has a *radical strategy to reveal His Manifest Wisdom and display His infinite Mercy, Kindness, and Goodness to all nations, tribes, tongues, ethnic groups and subgroups, bloodlines, generations, and households – as well as all the principalities and powers - on earth*. And we are finally figuring out that we and our children and our children’s children are the players our King intends to employ to play out the Drama for all to see. Sometimes what we are called to do will be pleasurable to us. Other times it will be intensely painful. But His Plan is not about our comfort or pleasure – or even, for that matter, about our personal journey toward growth in righteousness.

His Plan is about *the Rescue of Mankind from the Serpent's Mind-Control and Flesh-Manipulation Matrix* and *the Restoration of all Creation to Edenic levels of beauty and fruitfulness*. For the Bridegroom-King's plan to accomplish His lofty objectives there simply must be a people arise on earth who are willing to choose Him and His Ways out of passionate bride-like love – for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, *til death do us part*. And it is finally dawning on us - *that is where we come in!* Slowly, with Moshe's help, we are realizing not only *that* the Holy One *has called us to be a unique people* – distinct from all peoples of the earth – but *WHY* He has done so. There is something huge and glorious going on. This is what the Holy One meant when He told Avram: ***'in/through you all the families of the earth will be blessed'***. Genesis 12:3. Every time the Creator of Heaven and earth looks at us He sees Avram - and *smiles*. We have been chosen to function as *human vessels to pour out blessing He longs to pour out into and over the world*.

***Our Mission: Giving the World a Foretaste of,
and Making Humanity Hungry for, Mashiach***

When Mashiach comes in glory to set up His Kingdom on earth – may it occur *soon, in our day* - He is not going to be a figurehead; He is really going to sit on a Throne. He is really going to rule over the nations. He, not the United Nations, is going to decide their controversies. He is going to issue decrees – and they will not be symbolic or advisory. He alone is going to set the agenda for all peoples, all households, all bloodlines, all geographic regions, and all human institutions on the planet. And He is going to do all this in reliance upon and compliance with the very truths and protocols of Torah that He raised up Moshe to teach to us. Torah, you see, is an expression of the substance of Messiah's reign. When Mashiach sits enthroned in Jerusalem, the first priority of His agenda will be to teach, interpret, apply and enforce the Torah. It has always been, and will always be, the Constitution of His Kingdom. See **Isaiah 2:1-3**. In that day justice and righteousness will truly be *'on earth as they are in Heaven'*. And it will be us, the people who have the *Commandments of the Holy One* and the *Testimony of Yeshua* – not legions of angels, who will serve as the Great King's courtiers and ambassadors. Our Bridegroom-King wants the principalities, powers, and peoples of the earth to know that it is He Who has brought this thing to pass on earth as it is in Heaven – because He will bring it to pass using ordinary fallen – but gloriously forgiven - human friends, not some genetically-engineered super race of superior intelligence, talent, numbers, innate holiness, or skill.

It is becoming clear that the things that the methodology the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven has chosen to prepare us for this grand destiny is to establish Marks upon us that establish us as uniquely and undeniably *His*. The things He has chosen to

mark us as being set us apart unto Him operate both *inwardly* and *outwardly*.

It Begins in the Individual Heart: The Radical Inward Transformations That Our King is Calling Forth

We are to *inwardly think differently* than other people groups, but we are also to *outwardly adorn ourselves differently* than other people groups. We are to *inwardly look at the value and purpose of life differently* than other cultures, but we are also to *outwardly eat and drink and reckon time differently* than other people groups. We are to *inwardly relate to 'God' differently than other people groups*, but we are also to *outwardly respond to provocations and offenses and dangers in life differently* than other people do. And we are to *treat people - whether relatives, friends, neighbors or enemies - differently* than other people groups do.

We are to privately pray differently than all other people in the world, but we are also to publicly engage in worship of our God in markedly different ways than other people groups do. We are a people who are, by reason of a deep, ever-growing, all-consuming relationship with the Bridegroom-King of Heaven, called to think and act like Him – and thus unlike any other people on the face of the earth. We are called to walk so closely with the Bridegroom-King, and to so closely *sh'ma* His Voice and *re'eh* things through His Eyes, that we walk right past the distractions and overcome the obstacles that overwhelm most men.

We are to *face head-on* and learn to *overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life* that destroyed Adam and Chava. We are *face head-on* and learn to *overcome the anger and offense toward our brother that took down Kayin* [Cain]³, and just about destroyed the family of Ya'akov [KJV 'Jacob']⁴. We are *face head-on* and learn to *overcome the urge to take what we want to please our flesh, whenever and however we want to*, that led to the Great Flood. We are to *face head-on*, and learn to *overcome the urge to design our own God in our own image and do and build whatever pleases us in His Name that brought down the people at Babel*, those who died in the aftermath of the golden calf episode, and those who perished at Ba'al Pe'or. We are to *face head-on*, and learn to *overcome the urges of untamed sexual fantasy and lust that led to the rapes of Dinah⁵ and Tamar⁶*, and have *flung wide the door to cultural pre-occupation with and exploitation of sexuality in all sorts of forms and forums*. We are to *face head-on*, and learn to *overcome the craving for the thrill of extreme stimulations and experiences - no matter who gets hurt in the process - that led to the destruction of S'dom and*

³ To refresh your memory on the story of Kayin and Hevel please see Genesis 4:1 ff.

⁴ To refresh your memory on the story of Yosef and his brothers please see Genesis 37:2 ff.

⁵ To refresh your memory on the sad story of Shechem and Dinah please see Genesis 34:1 ff.

⁶ To refresh your memory on the sad story of Amnon and Tamar please see II Samuel 13:1 ff.

G'morrah. We are not called to overcome these things by our beliefs, our doctrines, our arguments, our political programs, our money, or our swords. We are called to overcome these things by returning to the loving embrace of the Bridegroom-King, and then *sh'ma-ing*, *sh'mar-ing* and *asah-ing* the *devarim* and the *mitzvot* of the Holy One. The sooner we *get* this concept, *internalize* it, and *surrender* to it, the sooner Creation can stop groaning in eager expectation for the people we are supposed to be - a people who will do the things we were put on earth to do⁷.

Resonating With the Frequency of Heaven; And Learning to Live From the Inside Out, Instead of the Other Way Around

The good news is that we do not have to do these things happen. The power to bring these things to pass is *in the Holy One's Words* – not in our minds, our wills, or our flesh. All we have to do is *sh'ma* – i.e. *begin to vibrate in resonance with His Words instead of trying to make the world conform our will*. You see, Dear Reader, the Words the Divine Bridegroom has spoken over us and our ancestors are *pure energy*. Pure energy does not dissipate. Every Word the Holy One has ever spoken is every bit as *alive* and *active* and *pertinent* to us today as it was when first spoken. The Divine Energy of those Words is *at work* within us. The life force in His Words is embedding itself in our hearts, our minds and our flesh. We are not as we were before those Words were brought into our consciousness. Our hearts and minds have become *incubation chambers for the Seed of the Holy One's Words*. Everything about us – heart, soul, mind, desires, appetites, thoughts, opinions, priorities, values, etc. - is now constantly re-aligning, *conforming to the image of* and *facilitating the growth to maturity of* the Words that we have ingested. We are caught up in a bio-spiritual process through which these Words are maturing from the *seed form* in which we receive them to *sprout form*, to *leaf form*, to *bloom form* to *fruit form* to *harvest form*. This inward process is roughly analogous to the transformation that goes on in a pregnant woman's body during pregnancy, as her womb constantly re-configures to conform to the shape of the baby she is carrying, and as her organs, emotions and tastes constantly re-align in order to provide whatever is needed to nurture that baby to term.

The key to avoid miscarriage or abortion of the Seed that is growing within us is to *yield to* and *let every facet of our lives be guided by* two powerful spiritual forces the rest of mankind does not understand. The first such force – *yirat Adonai* – refers to an ever-present sense of awe and wonder and awareness of the Presence of and our covenant responsibilities to the Holy One. The second force - *ahavat Adonai* - refers to a passionate the love of and thirst for intimate fellowship with and *to learn and do the will of* the Holy One. These forces are divine in origin and

⁷ Please see Romans 8:14-22 and Proverbs 13:12-14.

essence, but they require our permission and cooperation to operate effectively within us at any given time or in any specific situation. Thus, the key to establishing and maintaining the appropriate level of difference between us and all other peoples does not lie in our doctrine or creed; to the contrary, the key to the Divinely-ordained quantity and quality of difference is rooted in the extent to which we [1] fear/reverence the Holy One in the *yarah* sense, [2] give ourselves to love in the *ahav* sense, and [3] *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* the Words of the Holy One has spoken over and concerning us. It is not a matter of us achieving righteousness through our actions; it is a matter of us becoming who we were created to be and doing the things we *see Him doing* and *hear Him telling us to do*.

Are You Beginning to 'Show'?

A woman who is pregnant does not only change inwardly in response to the presence of the life force she is hosting – she also undergoes some rather dramatic *external changes*. The outward shape of her abdomen changes. Her *countenance* changes. Her *complexion* changes. Her *skin tone* changes. Her *diet* changes. The *kinds of clothes she wears* change. The way she *walks* changes. The way she *sits* changes. The way she *sleeps* changes. The way she *breathes* changes. What she *talks about* changes. What she *prioritizes* and *focuses her energy on during her waking hours* changes. The way she *expresses her emotions* changes. The way she *responds to people and situations* changes. So it is with us who carry within us the seed of the Word of the Holy One. The transformation we undergo by reason of the life force growing within us is by no means limited to the internal. Indeed, Moshe has made it clear that we are to bear the distinctive ‘mark’ of our Divine Bridegroom – visible to all the world, in *every area of life*.

Moshe has taught us that the internal transformation that the Words of the Holy One are bringing to pass in us is to affect all aspects of our lives extends to the way we *look*. It extends to the things we *speak about*. It extends to the things we *eat*. It extends to *the way we respond and relate to other people*. It extends to the kinds of things we *choose to do* and *choose not to do*. Thus far Moshe has taught us that we are to live by a *special calendar*, unique among all nations, structured around the Holy One’s *Shabbat* [Sabbath] and His *mo'edim* [Divine appointments, prophetic rehearsals, and/or festivals]. Moshe has also taught us that we are to *make food choices* that recognize and preserve the difference between that which leads toward *wholeness and the realm of life*, on the one hand [i.e. that which is *tahor*] and that which leads toward *confusion and fragmentation* and *the realm of death* on the other [i.e. that which is *tamei*]. Moshe has taught us as well that we are not to adopt and try to ‘redeem’ the worship modalities and practices of the pagan nations around us. We are instead supposed to recognize those modalities and practices as wood, hay and straw/stubble - things He is in the process of utterly consuming.

Instead of trying to redeem the irredeemable we are called to keep our spiritual energies focused on one place on earth alone – *the place where the Holy One will choose to place His Name* – i.e. the place where Messiah will appear and re-enact on earth the drama of blood redemption planned and played out in Heaven before the foundation of the world. We are therefore not to build for ourselves, or participate in the activities of, local shrines that draw focus and energy away from the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Mount. Our lives are not to be centered around religious ‘services’ led by clergymen, but are to be centered instead upon the study, teaching and ‘walking out’ of the Torah, the Holy One’s instruction manual for the Redeemed, in our homes and marketplaces, as we marvel at it from father to son, mother to daughter, neighbor to neighbor, and stranger to stranger, generation by generation.

Moshe has taught us that the redemption we have received from the Holy One, and the covenant lifestyle with which we have been entrusted, call for a distinction in the way we dress, the way we treat our bodies, the way we style our hair, and even the way we express our grief for those who have preceded us in death.

Why Does The Holy One’s Plan Call For Us to Look, Think, Speak, Respond, and Behave So Differently Than Everyone Else?

‘Why are all these differences necessary’ you ask? ‘Why can’t we just be like everyone else’ you wonder? ‘Wouldn’t it be easier if we could just look and act like “normal people”, you hypothesize? Think about it in terms of *the Bridal paradigm*. It is *all about a wedding and a marriage*. The Bridegroom does not want His Bride to look and act like all the other women. He wants – and deserves – her to *stand out*. She should be so unique and special that others should see her beauty – and her passionate *love for* and *dedication to* her Bridegroom - and *aspire to be like her*. If that is too intimate and personal for you, think about the same issue in terms of *the Kingdom paradigm*. It is all about *declaring* and *publishing* and *revealing* His majesty. The Holy One desires us to be instantly recognizable emissaries of His *Higher Kingdom* – i.e. walking models of what it means to be redeemed from bondage to the world’s pagan mindset, and to be in covenant with and bear the signet ring of the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

If all we offer the world is another set of *beliefs*, how is the sin of the Garden ameliorated? Please note that I did not ask how that sin – or any other - is *forgiven* or *atoned* for. I asked how it is *ameliorated*. I mean how is it *rectified*, and how are its adverse effects on humanity and creation going to be reversed? Chava’s problem was not a problem of *theology* or *doctrine*. Her problem was – and the world’s still is – *a lack of submission to the Wisdom, the Will, and the Words of the*

Holy One. This is the basic problem of man. Doctrine, creed, and systems of belief are not particularly helpful in the face of a well-enough crafted temptation. If the lust of the eye does not disarm your belief system, the lust of the flesh will. And if the lust of the flesh does not get you to abandon your beliefs and creed, the pride of life inevitably will.

It is not *believing the right stuff* that ameliorates the sin problem we inherited from Adam. Adam *believed all the right stuff*. His doctrine and theology bordered on impeccable. Despite knowing some pretty good doctrine, however, he and Chava were tempted to act according to their fleshly desires and the seduction of the pseudo-intellect rather than to *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* the instructions of the Holy One for human life on earth they chose poorly. How can this 'poor choice' pattern be rectified? How can its adverse effects on creation and humanity be ameliorated? How can we begin to overcome this sin pattern and experience the kind of intimacy with the Creator that Adam and Chava experienced in Eden before the Fall – on THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN? Ah Beloved, we can through Divine empowerment do what Adam and Chava did not - we can *sh'ma, sh'mar* and *asah* the instructions for human life on earth. Both inwardly and outwardly, we can yield to the changes the spiritual life force growing within us compels our minds, hearts, and flesh to make. *Vive le difference!*

Are you beginning to *Re'eh* [*i.e.* 'behold', or see the manifest glory of] the kingdom of the Holy One? Then let us press on further. Now that we have been stirred by seeing a few things from the Holy One's perspective it is time to discuss one of the most amazing aspects of the Torah lifestyle to which we are called – the subject of how we are supposed to *recognize* and *deal with* "the poor" in our midst.

Rethinking Who is – And is Not - 'Poor'

Throughout *Re'eh* Moshe has been challenging us to look at people and situations through a new set of lenses – the lenses of *Divinely Enhanced Vision*. He has showed us *two pathways* diverging before our eyes – *the Narrow Pathway of Ever-Increasing Blessedness* and *the Broad Way Leading Gradually but Inexorably to Destruction*. Very soon the Friend of the Bridegroom is going to ask us to choose which of these two pathways we want - for ourselves; for our households, extended families, and bloodlines; for our people/culture/society; and for the nations. Our choice does not determine the future shalom of us as individuals, you see – it draws everyone we know, everything we see, and every place we interact with into its trajectory.

The next thing the Holy One wants us to look at through the lens of Divinely Enhanced Vision is our way of *seeing, feeling about, relating to, and dealing with the poor*. How does the Bridegroom-King define 'the poor'? How does He want

His People to relate to and deal with those He defines as ‘poor’? Ah, these are some of the weightier issues of Torah. Fortunately, both issues are addressed thoroughly in Torah. Since we have Torah to advise us, we should not let culture, media, emotion, or partisan political agendas become our sources of information or motivation relative to these absolutely critical Kingdom issues.

The first reality we are called upon to grasp as we look at the issue of poverty through the lenses of Divinely Enhanced Vision is the amazing truth that the Bridegroom-King cares much, much more about - and is much more effective and efficient in dealing with - the poor of the world than any human being or collection thereof. He cares about the poor far more than any government official, any political party, any union, any popular movement, any church, synagogue, or charitable organization, or any foundation’s board of directors ever could. And He wants us – as His representatives on earth - to deal with the poor as He would. He does not want our dealings with the poor to be corrupted by demagoguery, manipulation, or begging for donations. He does not want the terms ‘poor’ or ‘poverty’ to be used by anyone in either a political talking point or a moral sermon. He wants us to learn to feel about each poor person individually exactly what He feels about them. He wants us to learn to see in and concerning the poor exactly what He sees. Then He then wants us to join Him in doing what He does, because we trust Him to know what He is doing at least more than we trust politicians and man’s ideas of ‘social justice’.

The Holy One does not want us to think of the poor as a *class*. He certainly does not want us to see them as a *voting block*. He does not want us to see them as *statistics*. He wants us to see each one as a unique and very precious *diamond in the rough*. Instead of just seeing ‘the *poor*’ the Holy One wants us to look much closer. He wants to see in each poor person a real, valuable, uniquely gifted human being who just presently happens to be experiencing a season of serious need. He does not want us to see them as ‘mouths to feed’. You see, Dear Reader, our Bridegroom-King does not just want us to *feed* poor people – or give them clothing or provide them lodging. What He wants us to do is *see the beauty and world-changing potential in each individual*. As a result, He wants us to love each one uniquely - *the way He loves them*. He does not want us to throw money at them. He wants us to invest time and energy and training in them.

If we do not get in tune with our Bridegroom-King on matters involving poor people, widows, fatherless folk, and foreigners, you see, He knows that our light-to-the-nations lamp will quickly go out. He knows our salt will become flavorless. And if, when, and to the extent that happens, He knows that demagogues and control freaks with oppressive agendas will rush in to fill the void we have failed to fill, take away the dignity of the individuals, and use them as pawns in their games

of political power and influence peddling. The Holy One knows that if, when, and to the extent that happens, it will leave the world – including the ‘poor’ - worse off than ever.

Oh my. That has *already* happened, hasn't it? That is the current state of ‘the poor’ – and of politics - in our world. And our light is very, very dim. And our salt is very, very bland. So how does the Holy One want us to reverse this nightmarish trend? The same way a young man keeps his way pure – *by sh'mar-ing the Holy One's d'varim*. See Psalm 119:9. The Holy One has a Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind, you see – and it is all contained and explained in His Beautiful Torah.

The Holy One's Radical Plan for Dealing With Individuals Who Become Poor

In our 21st Century Westernized culture the term “poor” has come to mean merely “working class”. In the political/ideological hate speech of our day, in order to get elected, demagogues stir up class envy by defining “poor” as anything other than grossly rich. Spouting a divisive ‘two-Americas’ or ‘apartheid’ message designed to incite ethnic offense, gender jealousy, and class envy if not all-out ethnic cleansing, gender warfare, and class violence, they define the ‘poor’ as anyone “less fortunate” [in their myopic, materialistic way of looking at the world] than those they choose to label as ‘privileged’. They classify anyone on a ‘fixed incomes’, or who does not earn six figures [\$100,000.00 or more per year], as ‘poor’. They quote statistics. They throw around derogatory labels. They chant incendiary slogans and spew profanity – and demand others do the same. They rant and rave about vague, abstract concepts like ‘equality’, and ‘fairness’, and ‘social justice’, and ‘morality’. They lump people together based upon race, upon gender, upon political persuasion, and upon any other artificial criteria they can use to fan the flames of fear, panic, offense, covetousness, envy, distrust, vengeance, and bloodlust. That should tell us how socialistic and deceived our society has become. We no longer define poverty in terms of real *need* – we now define it in terms of *class envy*. We now insist that *wealth should be equally distributed*, and develop social welfare and taxation programs in order to accomplish our concept of a “fair” redistribution. In so doing we have, of course, slapped the Holy One in the Face. Why? Because all the wealth of the world is *His* – and He distributes it to whom He wills. To declare that we know better than He how wealth should be distributed is, therefore, *to declare our independence from Him*, and build our own modern-day Tower of Babel.

‘Working class’ is not the Biblical concept of “poor”. Neither is being on a *fixed income* what makes a person “poor” according to the Holy One's Torah.

Re'eh - A Biblical, Actually Productive, Definition of 'Poverty'!

The Hebrew word which our English Bibles translate as “poor” is *'ebyon*⁸. It means in a *desperate situation*, about to starve to death, or die due to lack of raiment or shelter, if no one arises to rescue them. It means being *subject to oppression and abuse because of lack of provision*. *'Ebyon* is not a *comparative* term – i.e. one person is not ‘poor’ in comparison to someone else. One is either about to starve to death or be exposed to the elements under conditions that make death likely [i.e. be poor] or he is not. If he is going to starve to death, or suffer extreme illness or death from exposure, unless someone intervenes, he is poor. Otherwise he is not. If a person is not ‘poor’ *from a Biblical standpoint*, to intervene in his situation is *not Biblical*. It is, instead, to substitute one’s ideas of proper wealth distribution for those of the Holy One.

Back to the Garden again. The Serpent always tries to convince people who have all that the Holy One thinks they need that they are ‘poor’. In the Holy One’s wisdom, He had given Adam and Chava all they could ever need to fulfill the grand plan He had for them. But the Serpent convinced them they were poor because of the Holy One had not – for good reason – offered them the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And thus the first ‘*Two Americas*’/‘*Apartheid*’ speech found a willing audience and had its deadly effect. And now Moshe, speaking out of the vast reservoir of wisdom he has received from 40 years of intimacy with the Holy One, has some very interesting and thought-provoking things about “the poor” in today’s aliyah. First of all Moshe says:

*There should be no poor among you,
for in the land the Holy One your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance,
He will richly bless you IF ONLY you fully sh'ma the Holy One your God
and sh'mar [keep, treasure, guard, closely watch over] these instructions I am giving you today.”*

[Deuteronomy 15:4-5]

In verse 7 however Moshe accepts as a matter of fact (through His foreknowledge of the failure to follow the Torah) that there will be - though there should not be, as aforesaid - poor people “among your brothers” in the towns of the land, saying:

*If there is a poor man among your brothers
in any of the towns of the land that the Holy One your God is giving you,
do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother.
Rather, be open-handed and 'avat [lend him on a pledge] whatever he needs.*

[Deuteronomy 15:7]

Finally the Holy One tells us that poor people are something we will always have around to deal with, saying:

⁸ Ebyon is *alef, beit, yod, vav, nun sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word #34, it is pronounced *abe-yone'*.

There will always be poor people in your land.
Therefore be open-handed toward your brother AND toward the poor and needy in your land.
[Deuteronomy 15:11]

As you will recall Messiah Yeshua quoted this verse – in the context of a murmuring among the *talmidim* over the extravagant act of the woman with the alabaster box:

*... a woman came to him having an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment,
and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.*
*But when his talmidim saw this they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?
For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."
But Yeshua, knowing this, said to them, "**Why do you trouble the woman?
Because she has done a good work for me.***
For you will always have the poor with you; but you will not always have Me.
[Matthew 26:7-11]

So ... What Does the Creator Have To Say?

Before we begin to explore the teachings of today's aliyah concerning the poor more carefully, perhaps we should review what the Holy One has previously revealed to us regarding the "poor". First of all we learned early on – even before we got to *Sinai* – that we are called to look upon the poor and the rich alike as precious brothers. We learned that we are *not to take the side of the poor against the rich*⁹ [there are no *Robin Hoods* or socialists in the Kingdom], *any more than we are to take the side of the rich against the poor*¹⁰ [there is no 'caste system' in the Kingdom]. We are always to recognize, as *Chanah* [Hannah], mother of Sh'muel [Samuel] the prophet, declared:

***The Holy One makes poor, and makes rich:
He brings low, he also lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust,
He lifts up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes,
Inherit the throne of glory:
for the pillars of the eretz are the Holy One's; He has set the world on them.***
[I Samuel 1:7-8]

Secondly we learned that we are to leave both the "*corner of the field*"¹¹ and the "*gleanings*" of our harvest¹² (that which we miss in our first pass of harvesting) for the poor. Please note, however, that neither the *dimensions of the corner of the field* nor the amount and *quantity of gleanings* that we are to leave for the poor are prescribed. These are matters as to which the sages of Israel tell us "there is no prescribed measure". They are therefore things which force us to interact with, and rely upon the prompting of, His *Ruach* [Spirit] to guide us in implementation. Leaving or setting aside too much for others to use effectively testifies of both a

⁹ Exodus 23:3, reiterated and explained in Leviticus 19:15.

¹⁰ Exodus 23:6, reiterated and explained in Leviticus 19:15.

¹¹ Leviticus 19:9-10; Leviticus 23:22.

¹² Leviticus 19:10.

desire for the recognition of men and bad stewardship; leaving or setting aside too little for others to use for necessities of life, on the other hand, testifies both of *self-centeredness* and an attitude of *self-reliance*.

Thirdly, if a member of our community needs immediate money for an emergency, *we are to lend to him freely*¹³. We are to negotiate with him as to what collateral he can offer as a pledge of repayment, and are to accept such personal property as he has. But we are not to either charge him interest or keep his *necessities of life* from him overnight – even if he has in desperation pledged them to us as collateral for his loan.

Fourthly, we are to allow a member of our community who, for whatever reason, cannot support himself, and who desires to exchange his right to operate and profit from his ancestral estate in Eretz Yisrael for money, to ‘purchase’ from him, for a fair price, the right to use and obtain profit from his land – but *only until the next Yovel* [50 year Jubilee] *or until he or a relative redeems the land, whichever shall first occur*¹⁴. By the time of the next *Yovel*, he is expected to have used the money we loaned him wisely, as The Holy One directs him, so that he has returned to a point of prosperity where he can *stand on his own* again, and *become again a good steward of the land* and a *productive, contributing member of the society*.

Fifthly, if a person has already sold his ancestral estate as aforesaid, and spent the proceeds, and is *still* unable to support himself and his family, and who therefore desires to become our *indentured servant*, we are to permit him do so¹⁵. We are to undertake to feed, clothe, and shelter such a person on a temporary basis [until the next *sh'mittah* – *a maximum of six years*], in exchange for his labor during that period. We are to work him hard during that period, but are not to assign him degrading tasks¹⁶, or rule over him ruthlessly¹⁷. We are to consider him a ‘borrowed servant’ – one we have temporarily borrowed from, but who really belongs [as do we] to the Holy One¹⁸. Of course, if at any time during the years he has committed to our service he [or a relative] redeems him by paying us compensation in lieu of his services, we are to let him go, and send him out with provision.

Once all these things have been done, if a man among the Holy One’s people is still “poor” as Torah defines it, there *is really a problem*. The man is in the throes of a ‘death spiral’. Remember, he started out as an *equal heir and owner* of *Eretz*

¹³ Exodus 22:25-27; Leviticus 25:35-37.

¹⁴ Leviticus 25:13-17, 23-31.

¹⁵ Exodus 21:2-4; Leviticus 25:35.

¹⁶ Leviticus 25:39.

¹⁷ Leviticus 25:43, 53.

¹⁸ Leviticus 25:42, 55.

Yisrael. From that point, for some reason, he has gone down, step by step, to the point where he can no longer pledge anything as collateral for a loan, sell the right to produce crops from land or obtain rent from houses, or even sell his services. Such a person is in real trouble. Such a person is indeed “poor”. And the Holy One’s *eye* – and His *Hand* – are upon him. The Holy One knows both what he needs to survive and what it is going to take over the long term to restore him to productivity. And that, as was stated earlier in this shiur, is *where we come in* – *if* we will just *sh’ma* the Holy One, and submit to live according to His Torah.

Bulletin: The Truly, Biblically Poor Among Us
are the Ultimate Test of our Sh’ma Lifestyle

Hear, O Israel: How you and I relate to the truly poor – those not just less well off than us, but actually in *dire need* - is *very important to the Holy One*. In fact, one of the characteristics of the Holy One’s *k’doshim* [holy people] – one of the things He has spoken creatively and prophetically over us - is that we will *properly* relate to the poor and needy. The Holy One could wipe out poverty *any time He wants*. His supplies are inexhaustible. So why does the Holy One allow people to become ‘poor’ – nay, as *Chanah* [Hannah] recognized, *He makes poor, and makes rich*. **I Samuel 1:7**. There is no escaping it. The Holy One allows people to become truly poor *for His own glory*. He does it, in some instances, to discipline and strengthen the one who is ‘poor’. He does it, in other instances, to demonstrate to the world His power to redistribute wealth as He deems most consistent with His plan for mankind. And that, rather than because ‘government is not doing enough’, or because ‘rich people are getting richer’, is why Yeshua said, “*you always have the poor among you.*”

Is it just possible that it is *not our job* to declare war on poverty? Is it possible that our man-ordained war on poverty is sometimes really *war against the Holy One* – working at cross purposes with His Will and His Plan, and thwarting [actually only delaying] what He is trying to accomplish in the life of the deprived and in the lives of those whose paths the Holy One causes his to cross? Is it possible the ‘war on poverty’ demagogues on our political landscape are really just the Serpent in disguise, pointing at the wealth the Holy One has given to those to whom He has chosen to entrust it the way the Serpent pointed to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and saying ‘*You will not surely die*’?

Could it be that the Holy One causes the truly poor to cross our paths in order to *test us* – i.e. to give us an objective standard by which to judge if we are, or are not, *sh’ma*-ing Him? In lives in which the Holy One is King, and in which His Torah is the Constitution by which life is conducted, *there is no need of government welfare programs* for the “poor”. From the hearts of those who *sh’ma*, the compassion of

the Holy One for the truly needy of society pours out in abundance, for all to *re'eh* [behold, see, consider].

*... do not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your poor brother;
but in truth open your hand to him,
and lend him whatever is sufficient in truth to meet his need
[in that] which he desperately needs.
[Deuteronomy 15:8]*

Do you want to know if your spiritual life is ‘on target’? Then look at how you *look upon* and *relate to* those who cross your path who are or present themselves to you as *truly in need*. The surest sign of spiritual trouble is a pattern of behaving improperly toward the truly poor and needy. So understand that the teachings of today’s aliyah are ‘big ones’ for us to grasp and apply.

Be Very Careful What You Give to Whom

Torah does not contemplate government *handouts* for the “poor”. That is the ‘world’s way’. Government-funded *handouts* do not involve *sh'ma*-ing the Holy One. At best they are about assuaging one’s conscience without dealing with a problem in any meaningful sense; at worst they are just a means of accumulating political power. Governmental hand-out programs have a tendency to both *rob the disadvantaged of self-respect* and *condition them to dependency upon the “helper”* – *i.e.* the human source, be it government, philanthropist or alms-giver - rather than upon the Holy One. They discourage ingenuity and enterprise. They operate a bit like putting a Band-Aid on a gangrenous sore – they cover up the problem temporarily so most people don’t have to look at it, and assume it is taken care of, but they *do not deal with the core problem in any meaningful sense*.

There are times when non-government hand-outs need to be made, in times of intense crisis; but when that is the case such hand-outs should be made *anonymously* if at all possible so that the recipient is not tempted to *credit* the benefactor [rather than the Holy One] for the “free gift”¹⁹. Free gifts are *the Holy One’s business* – not ours. We are never to give them unless He specifically tells us to. The provision made for the “poor” in the Torah, you see, is always a *hand up*, not a *handout*. Torah authorizes us to give a person who is temporarily down a “lift” only.

Under the Torah system therefore *the poor man* is the one who has to exert most of the energy and who is expected to *make the most of the opportunity provided*. To do this, the poor person will have to *sh'ma* the Holy One’s instructions as to how to

¹⁹ This is a part of the reasoning behind Messiah’s teaching, in Matthew 6:1-4, that our acts of *tzedakah* [here, meaning acts of benevolence] are to be done *in secret*. The other part of His reasoning is that acts of *tzedakah* are not to be performed in order to earn admiration from others, or to take for ourselves honor, which belongs only to the Holy One.

utilize the benevolence in such a way as to get back on his feet. If he wastes or misuses the opportunity provided to him/her, he/she must be allowed to taste at least some consequences. Torah does not therefore countenance a socialist State. Indeed, we are nowhere told in the original language of Torah to “give” to the poor – we are instead told to *lend* to the poor. The difference is significant. We are not to be lazy or aloof in our dealings with the poor. We are to engage with the person as we would a potential business associate, treating them as responsible agents of self-determination. We are to negotiate with them both *terms of repayment* and *collateral*. And both we and the poor person are to treat the transaction as an investment rather than a *handout*.

The Holy One’s Seven-Year Plan

The initial part of today’s aliyah tells us that our Covenant Partner in Heaven has a “*seven-year plan*” for our lives (and, prophetically, for the world He has created). Our dealings with the poor in our midst are to reflect and enhance our awareness of this seven-year plan.

Step One: Forgiving Debts Owed by Members of the Covenant Community

*If there be with you a poor man, one of your brothers,
within any of your gates in your land*

*you are to surely open your hand to him,
and are to surely lend him sufficient for his need [in that] which he wants.*

*Beware that there not be a base thought in your heart, saying,
“The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand”;
and your eye be evil against your poor brother,
and you give him nothing; and he cry to the Holy One against you, and it be sin to you.*

*You are to surely invest in/entrust in stewardship to him,
and your heart will not be grieved when you do so to him;
because that for this thing the Holy One your God will bless you in all your work,
and in all that you put your hand to.*

If you have ears to hear, this part of the aliyah is what Yeshua was speaking about when He taught the talmidim [disciples] about prayer, telling them they should pray: ... ***and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*** Luke 11:4. But how can I say that, you ask? How can I connect these two things? In the Torah, before going into detail concerning how we should deal with the poor in general, the Holy One taught us to be a people who understand and practice, who *regularly* both give and receive, forgiveness. *A people who forgives debt according to Torah’s schedule will put material possessions in their proper place, and view them from the proper perspective.* As part of His instruction manual for life, when the Holy One, in this aliyah of Torah, set up a schedule for us to *make sh’mittah* [cancel the debts owed to us], He taught us how to receive and accept total forgiveness from Him and from

our fellows – and to give it. As a people set apart, we are to demonstrate our understanding of the goodness of the Holy One by our actions - and what better way than to have a joyous celebration with our debtors in the year of *sh'mittah*. This sets them free from dependence upon us. This enables them to turn back to total dependence on God.

Of course, if you believe your provision comes from your own labor and ingenuity it seems a little crazy to cancel debts that are rightfully owed to you just because the Torah says to; if, on the other hand, you believe the Holy One is the source of all your food and shelter, and is the supplier of all your needs, and your destiny and purpose in life is to fulfill Torah so that all can see the Holy One's goodness made manifest, then making *sh'mittah* – forgiving debts every 7 years - is the most natural and logical thing you could do. We are to forgive our debtors (once every 7 years), and rejoice with the debtors we have set “free” - so *we* can learn to receive forgiveness of our debts from the Holy One. Note however that the *sh'mittah* did not extend to the “sojourner” or foreigner. Of someone *outside covenant relationship with the Holy One*, payment could still be required. We thus learn that *forgiveness is something that is based upon covenant relationship*. If a “foreigner/sojourner” accepts the covenant, of course, he becomes one of us, and then we *make sh'mittah* with him as well. The Holy One offers forgiveness to everyone, but it is conditional upon their entering into covenant with Him.

Step Two: Release of Bond Servants

Today's aliyah also discusses *the release of bondservants*. It is one thing to release a right to a person's *money*. It is wholly something else to release a person from a sense of *personal obligation and loyalty*. If we help a person, and pour our lives and our provision into them, and we take them into our homes or businesses in order to help them, we come to expect an attitude of appreciation, loyalty, and gratitude from the one we have helped. We expect the one who has received our help to be thankful, remember who helped them, and act accordingly. But this expectation is not spiritually healthy. It tends to foster co-dependent relationships, which are not the Holy One's plan. The Holy One wants us to remember whose provision and whose home it really was that was given – *not ours, but His*. He wants us to remember that we cannot “own” another one of His kids. He wants us – and the world – to know that we are not *philanthropists*, over whom the world should fawn, but *stewards* – mere fellow servants of our poor brethren.

Thus after six years not only are all our ‘bondservants’ to be released, they are to be *sent forth with abundant gifts*. We are to invest in/entrust in stewardship to our bondservants “*as the Holy One your God has blessed you.*” This is the Holy One's way. He caused the Egyptians to do the same for us. We are to be imitators of the

Holy One.

These “seven-year” provisions - which are of course patterned after and remind us of the Shabbat - teach us much about our God, and about how we are to look upon finances, possessions, and circumstances. We are a people set apart - we are not to look like the world, but are to reflect the Holy One’s goodness and graciousness. Our response to the sins of others, to the debts we are owed, and to the co-dependent relationships in our lives, is to be radically different from the response of the world. We are not capitalists, communists, or entrepreneurs - we are *stewards*, and a light to the Nations. We are not to shine our light, but HIS.

Step Three: Maintaining a Compassionate Heart

Now, all this we have talked about before is preliminary - to focus us upon the main revelation of today’s aliyah - proper attitude and behavior toward “the poor” in our midst. It starts with ATTITUDE. We are not to think ill of, or look down upon, anyone who is “poor”. We are not to look upon the possessions we have as “ours”. We are also not to look upon those possessions we have as belonging to the “poor” – they are the Holy One’s and His alone.

We do not have to – and act independent of the Holy One if we *try* to – solve all the problems of the “poor”. We are merely to follow the instructions He gave us in the Torah. We should not feel *guilt* over having possessions any more than we should feel *pride* in having possessions. Whatever possessions we may have were entrusted to us – not to someone else - in the Holy One’s infinite wisdom. We need not – must not – apologize for that fact. Nor are we to be “hard-hearted” or “tight-fisted”; we are to be “*compassionate*” of heart. But we are not to act under the compulsion/coercion of emotion or impulse; we are to carefully consider the best interest of the person, to take note of what the Holy One is doing in that person’s life, and to be *willing*, if the Holy One directs us, *to lend such things to him on a pledge* as the Holy One tells us he truly needs.

The Holy One says we are to “*lend on a pledge*”. Why? Because we are always to protect the dignity of the poor man or woman. The Holy One says that if we “give generously” [lend on a pledge] to a poor man, and do so without a grudging heart, *God will “bless us”* in all our work and “*in everything we put our hands to.*” **Deuteronomy 15:10**. This is not a magic formula for prosperity – it is simply God’s way of distributing wealth. It is entrusting possessions to those who will fulfill the Holy One’s purposes with them, and honor Him, not themselves.

Step Four: It is a Hands-On Project; So Make It Personal, and Keep it Real

Dealing with the poor is not, according to Torah, a *political/societal* issue. It is

instead a *personal spiritual* issue. It is a test of the heart attitude of the Holy One's people. It is not best dealt with by legislation, by the government, by the Red Cross or the Salvation Army, or for that matter by local churches and synagogues. It is best dealt with, according to Torah, by *individual families who have experienced the spiritual enlightenment, renewal, and blessing of the Holy One*. It is a 'hands-on' project. After all, the Holy One tells us not only to maintain a *compassionate heart*, but to extend an "*open hand*". **Deuteronomy 15:7**. Donations to civic organizations and relief agencies are all well and good, but they are *not the 'more excellent' way of Torah*. All of the Torah's instructions regarding dealing with the poor are instructions *to individuals* – heads of families – not to community policymakers or legislators, priests or clergymen. Every Torah-submissive man, woman and child is to have or be in the process of developing:

- [a] a proper understanding of the things that cause a person to be poor,
- [b] a proper (not condescending or sentimental) attitude toward the poor around him, and
- [c] proper behavior toward the poor around him - so that the poor person does not fall into, or perpetuate, a co-dependent lifestyle or develop an "entitlement" mentality.

The time of abdicating this responsibility to government and to 'non-profit' organizations is coming to an end. The Holy One expects – and is prophetically calling forth - much more from His people. Who will take up the challenge?

Questions For Today's Study

1. The first thing we need to do is understand what it means to be "poor". To begin this process, pull out your Strong's Concordance and Gesenius Lexicon (or pull each up on the internet through a site like blueletterbible.org) and look up the word translated as "poor" in today's aliyah.

[A] Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[B] Now go to Gesenius' Lexicon and to Richard's or Vine's (or other) Expository Dictionary of Bible Words and look up what that source says about the meaning of that word, and write a summary of what you think the word means.

2. The second thing we need to do is understand how one *becomes* "poor". The ways in which one becomes "poor" (and some causes of becoming poor) are spelled out at numerous places in Scripture. Read Proverbs 10:4, Proverbs 20:13, Proverbs 21:17, Proverbs 23:27, and Proverbs 13:23, then list the things which, according to the Bible, cause a person - even a Redeemed person - to become "poor". [Caution: Do not allow yourselves to become judgmental or self-righteous when you read these things – there but for the grace of the Holy One go you and I].

3. Read Proverbs 14:31.

- [A] How does oppressing a poor person “show contempt for one’s Maker”?
[B] How does showing kindness to the needy “honor God”?

4. Write an essay or report on the “Year of Release” [Hebrew, *sh'mittah*]. In that report/essay, discuss all the things that were supposed to happen in that year. How does this differ from the Year of *Yovel* [Jubilee]?
5. What does Moshe say will happen to you if you give generously, in a Scriptural way, to people in your community whom you know to be in real need [See Deuteronomy 15:10]?
6. When a servant who was a fellow Hebrew was released in the Seventh Year of His service, what was the master supposed to do for the servant? Why?
7. How does a servant become a *servant for life*? What would the servant have done had he not chosen to become a servant for life?
8. In today’s Haftarah aliyah the prophet *Yeshayahu* [KJV ‘Isaiah’] addresses things which the Holy One’s Redeemed who come to Jerusalem (this is the context) are to eat and on which they are to spend the money they have set aside as a “tithe”.

*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters,
and he who has no money; come you, buy, and eat;
yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?
and your labor for that which doesn't satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat you that which is good,
and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

[A] What does what Yeshayahu has to say add to your understanding of what yesterday’s Torah has to say about what God’s people are to eat and not to eat, and what is to be done with the tithe and with possessions and money in general?

[B] What does Yeshayahu [Isaiah] say will happen if the Holy One’s people will listen [yes, the Hebrew word is *sh'ma!*] to Him and come back to Him?

9. Today’s reading from the apostolic Scriptures for today is I John 4:3-4:

*... every spirit who doesn't confess
that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh
is not of God, and this is the spirit of the anti-messiah,
of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already.
You are of God, little children, and have overcome them;
because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.*

[A] Look up “overcome” in Strong’s [Greek word # 3528], and write a definition for “overcome” your own words.

[B] Explain in your own words how we are to “overcome” the spirit of

AntiMessiah (remember, that means *against* or *instead of*, or *in the place of* Messiah).

*May you know how to give and to receive sh'mittah,
and how to understand and relate properly to the poor in our midst!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalms 113:6-9 and 140:12-13

*Who stoops down to see in heaven and in the eretz?
He raises up the poor out of the dust;
lifts up the needy from the ash heap;
That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.
He settles the barren woman in her home as a joyful mother of children.
Praise the Holy One!*

*I know that the Holy One will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
and justice for the needy.
Surely the righteous will give thanks to your name.
The upright will dwell in your presence.*