

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

Readings: **Torah B'reshit:** **Genesis 3:1-24**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 42:17-21**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:6-13**

Adam and his wife hid

[Genesis 3:8]

Today's Meditation is Job 36:22-31;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Avot*, the *Prayer of the Fathers*

V'ha-nachash hayah arum – And the serpent was the most subtle/crafty ... mikol chayot ha-sadeh asher asah Adonai Elohim – of all the beasts of the field that the Holy One God had asah-ed Genesis 3:1a.

It is time we checked back in on Adam and Chava, the Garden, and the Creator's Grand Plan. When last seen our friendly *homo sapiens* ancestors were basking like blissful newlyweds in the Ultimate Garden Spot Wedding Venue. Ah, *Gan Eden* - the place and the time of celebrating life, love, and 'just us'. The weather was fair. The breezes were favorable. The air was clear, sweet, and unpolluted. Rivers of living water flowed in cascading fountains. Every kind of beautiful flower, tree, and shrub surrounded us. Luscious fruit was everywhere for the picking. A synergistic harmony prevailed between all species. Adam had a funny, friendly, and faithful *Ezer Kenegdo* with whom to enjoy delightful companionship. There was no drama, no trauma, no pathology, no offense, no insecurity, and no pain. Conversations ran their course without any taint of sarcasm, cynicism, accusation, or double entendre. Communion flowed without a hint of complaint, accusation, score keeping, ranting, railing, or manipulation. Purposeful work was performed with enthusiasm, excellence, and artistry – and without a hint of competitiveness. There were no thistles, no thorns, no '-isms', no '-olitics', and no '-ologies'. The couple was thriving - and happy. All was right with the world. Selah!

The writer of Torah describes mankind's state in those day as follows:

Vayihyu sh'neihem arumim ha-adam v'ishto v'lo yitboshashu

The man and his wife were both naked² but they were not ashamed.

[Genesis 2:25]

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² The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as *naked* in this verse [*arumim*] is a plural form of the word *arom*, *ayin*, *resh*, *vav*, *mem sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #6174, pronounced *aw-rome*'. This word is usually translated as *naked* or *bare*. It is, however, derived from the verb root *aram*, Strong's Hebrew word #6191, pronounced *aw-ram*', and meaning to be crafty, cunning, or subtle.

All the prototypical couple could see was beauty. All they knew was bounty. All they needed was the Manifest Presence of the Creator, Who doubled as their Father, their Rabbi, their Life-Coach, their Hero, and their Closest Friend. At His Right Hand they experienced Pleasures evermore. In His Will they found peace – no, make that perfect *shalom* - without interruption. Fullness of Joy. Favorable winds. Innocence. Ah, yes - life in the garden was like ... well, fill in the blank with your ultimate superlative, with your favorite image, and your grandest vision.

The Holy One is showing us the *end goal* of human experience – a state of Edenic bliss flowing from *full communion, intimate collaboration, responsible co-creation, and benevolent co-reigning* with Him.

Back to Eden ... or Bust!

For all of us, therefore, it always has been, always is, and will always be, *Eden* or bust! There is no place like home! *Eden* is the *salmon spawning nest* of mankind as a species. It is therefore the place to which something primeval inside of us aspires to return. There is a deep *longing for Eden* in our souls - because the Eternal One put it there. Every human being was designed and engineered *for a garden of delight like Eden*. Each of us was made to be surrounded by beauty, to bask in Divine pleasure, and to enjoy intimate friendship with the King. And deep down, when we remember Eden, and the initial glorious estate of the progenitors of our species, we know that *no place else will ever be home*, and that *no other lifestyle will ever come close to satisfying*. Eden is not just our past, you see; we inherently sense that it is our future. And to the extent we can see and embrace them, we can be assured that elements of Eden can be a present reality for us as well. The dust of Eden is always waiting for us, calling to us – from just beyond the veil that separates that which is seen and temporal from that which is unseen and eternal.

What could possibly have gone wrong? What could possibly have spoiled our reverie? What could possibly have gotten into us? What could possibly have separated us from this *place*, this *memory*, this *dream*? Alas, that, it turns out, was something primeval inside us as well. It turns out, you see, that every human being has an Achilles Heel. There is a chink in every human being's armor. And there is also, unfortunately, a serpent in every human being's garden, a valley of the shadow on every human being's horizon, and a smelly skeleton in every human being's closet. Don't look so shocked. Don't be so dismayed. Don't start looking around for someone to blame, rant about, shout at, stare down, or hate on. Don't lose your *shalom*. This, too, is part of the Grand Plan. And the Holy One will work this, too, for good for all who love Him, who are called according to His Purpose. As the sages say: "***Yeridah tzorech aliyah***" – *i.e.* one must go down in order to be able to go up. Think of Ya'akov. Think of Yosef. Think of bondage in Egypt.

Think of captivity in Babylon. Think of the Holocaust. Then turn your eyes to the future, and the glorious promises – and experiences - of return. Take a deep breath. Breathe. Smile. It is going to be alright. In fact, it is going to be better than Adam and Chava could possibly imagine. Every descent is for the purpose of an even greater ascent. They – and we – just have to learn the joy of teaming up with the Holy One to overcome challenges, transcend failures, deal with consequences, and start over with a new matrix of realities. And *oh what revelations* about the Holy One, His love, and His Grand Redemptive Plan are about to be exposed for those who have eyes to see! But do not forget, Dear One – we are not just supposed to *marvel* at the mysteries; our mission in this life is to *become faithful stewards of them*. **II Corinthians 4:1-2**. We are to *learn from them* – and then *live from them*. So let's go back to the narrative – and let the text talk. It is time for yet another stunning Torah mystery to be revealed.

Please Help Me, I'm Falling ...

But don't get too comfortable in this idyllic environment. The Great Storyteller is about to reveal what lies between the Prototypical Edenic State of mankind and the Ultimate Edenic state of the species. It is time to introduce the first of many antagonists to the Great Story. our 'enemy within' - the *yetzer hara*. It is time to learn about – and discover how to manage - the dangerous 'dark side' of human thought, emotion, speech, and behavior. Let's listen in.

Torah's narrator tells us: *V'ha-nachash hayah arum mikol chayot ha-sadeh asher asah Adonai Elohim* – and the serpent was the most 'cunning' of the beasts of the field called forth/created by the Holy One God ... *vayomer el-ha-ishah af ki-amar Elohim lo tocheilu mikol etz ha-gan* – and he said to the woman 'Did Elohim really say you must not eat from any of the garden's trees?'

The instigator of the first two-way dialogue in recorded human history is described by the Great Narrator simply as *ha-nachash* - *i.e.* 'The Serpent'. What are we told about this mysterious character? Not much, really. We really don't need to know anything more than that [1] he is a 'beast of the field', and [b] he is the most 'cunning' [Hebrew *arum*] of the beings that the Immaculate Protagonist created. We do not know - or need to know - what physical form the serpent took. We don't need to insert any 'memory images' from our personal experience with the genus *Squamada* (scaled reptiles), suborder *Serpentes* (snakes), into this narrative. We do not know - or need to know - how this creature moved about. We do not know - or need to know - what this wily character's personal agenda was on the day in question. All we need to know is that, as a new act of the Great Drama begins, he finds his way onto Torah's stage, and enjoys his moment in the spotlight a little too

much for our comfort. The action starts with a face-to-face encounter with our story's Female Lead. *Chava* – meet the Serpent – meet Chava.

To Chava's surprise, the creature spoke. He started the first recorded two-way conversation ever recorded with a question – one that she clearly was not anticipating. What was the question? English Bibles translate the Hebrew words roughly as '*Did Elohim really say that you are not to eat from any of the garden's trees?*'

Whatever the answer to that question might be, what business could it possibly be of the Serpent? What did the Holy One's instructions about what Adam and Chava were to eat or not eat have to do with him? Chava had an important and all-consuming assignment. She was supposed to be co-laboring with Adam, tending and keeping the Holy One's beautiful but demanding. She did not have time to stop what she is doing and respond to such an impertinent, irrelevant question. This was clearly a distraction. The serpent had no need to know the answer to this question – and if he wanted to know, all he had to do was ask the Holy One – His Creator – himself. This was a temptation/distraction question, not a legitimate inquiry. Do you know the difference, Beloved?

Ah, but can Chava resist the temptation to show off what she believes to be her superior pseudo-intellectual knowledge? Can she resist the temptation to condescend, to 'mansplain' – or, in this case, to 'womansplain' - and to pontificate? Can you? Can I?

The most dangerous temptation of life, you see, is not the sensual desirability of some physical object like the fruit of the tree; it is the opportunity to show off; to spout off, and waste time thinking and talking about things we do not understand nearly as well as we think we do.

I Fall to Pieces

Most theologians today refer to the mystery of what happened next in the great drama as '*the Fall*'. Some sages of Israel have labeled it '*the Trial of Man's Freedom*'. I personally prefer to think of it as '*The Unveiling of Man's Pressure Points of Vulnerability*'. Oh what secrets are about to be revealed! Oh what revelations about the weaknesses of man's flesh, about man's propensity toward pseudo-intellectualism, about man's easily manipulated emotion-sensuality-sentimentality matrix, about man's tendency to over-react to everything, and about man's susceptibility to 'filthy mouth disease' are about to be exposed!

Don't look around at anyone else, Dear Reader. This is not about the stranger on

the street; it is about the man (or woman) in the mirror. So ... do you know, fully understand, and have a handle on *your areas of inherited – or acquired - weakness*? Do you understand *the areas in which your flesh is weak – i.e. inclined toward and susceptible to distraction, seduction, and self-absorption*? Do you have a handle on *the areas in which your mind is weak – i.e. inclined toward and susceptible to deception, disinformation, selective memory, self-serving rhetoric, emotional manipulation, self-justification, and folly*? Do you know, and grasp the significance of, *the weakness of your mouth and organs of speech – and why your speech tends to gravitate toward slander, accusation, blame, criticism, and judgment rather than blessing, encouragement, edification, and gentle exhortation designed to cooperate with the Holy One’s grand plan of redemption*? Have you been cooperating with – or resisting - the Creator’s plan to equip you to face up to, meet the challenge of, overcome, and transcend each of these areas of identity-stealing, purpose-defeating, destiny-threatening weakness?

Beware the Stranger ... and His Ways

Man and his new *ezer kenegdo* are not alone in the garden of delight. Someone - or something – else is there. Someone – or something – is breathing the same air, drinking from the same fountain, and eating of the same trees as the blissful couple. This someone – or something – is far more dangerous than man can fathom. He – or it – has spied out their nakedness in ways they cannot even imagine. As a result this someone - or something – now knows man and woman’s weaknesses almost as well as the Holy One does. He – or it – has devised a plan to test and exploit those weaknesses. He knows all the right buttons to push – and in what order, and under what circumstances, to push them.

The Creator is by no means oblivious to what is going on. The Holy One has known all along that the paths of this someone – or something – and mankind are destined to cross. He knows exactly what will transpire as a result. And He has a plan – and a very effective strategy – up His sleeve as well.

He could stop what is about to happen any time He wants. But this, too, is an essential part of the *greatest love story ever told*, and *the greatest love song ever written*. This too is a part of the Holy One’s grand plan for mankind and Creation. You see, Dear One, man was not just designed to serve as a keeper of a beautiful Garden, a companion to His Creator, a recipient of material blessings, an object of affection, and an instrument of worship. Man was designed to function as a *strategic weapon* – indeed *THE* strategic weapon - in a great conflict. Man was designed to co-labor with the Holy One to bring redemption, restoration, healing, and deliverance to the earth. And for those things to have any meaning, there must be a very real need for them. The Holy One has that covered as well. Enter the wily

adversary, right on cue.

Introducing the Strategic Role the Serpent Is Destined to Unwittingly Play in the Grand Redemptive Plan

In the course of today's assigned readings from Torah we will be introduced to a character we have not yet had the pleasure to meet. He will be referred to simply as 'the serpent'. He, like Adam, is a created being. Adam and Chava have had their moment of bliss; now it is *the serpent's turn* to take center stage in the narrative. It is now time for the serpent to step out of the shadows and interrupt Adam and Chava's idyllic garden experience. Our human heroes are about to have their weaknesses probed and tested – and their world turned upside down. Torah will record it all. This is not just their story, you see; it is our story as well. This is not just the story of their 'Fall'; it is the story of our 'Fall' as well. This is not just the story of the *trial of their freedom*; it is the story of the *trial of our freedom* too.

It will, at first glance, seem to us like a great tragedy – an unmitigated disaster. It will seem to the casual reader like the serpent ruins everything. It will seem that he deals the poor, unprepared, helpless Creator a devastating setback. It will seem like he hands Adam and Chava – and all their progeny - their heads on a platter. But is that what is really about to happen? Is the serpent really going to 'win'? Is the Holy One really going to be outsmarted, outmaneuvered, outflanked? Or is it possible the Holy One is going to take even this, and work it together for good for those who love Him, and who are called according to His purpose? Of course it is possible, Dear Reader. There is a great eternal plan unfolding. The serpent may not realize it, but he has been given license to do what he is about to do for a long-term strategic reason. And in the end, when the smoke clears, it is the serpent – not the Holy One, and not His cherished creation mankind - who will come out on the bottom of the pile and the short end of the stick.

It may look like the Serpent is about to sneak in and pull off a great coup. But he has no idea what he is about to unleash. He has no idea that the Holy One is going to use the very event he thinks he is orchestrating to kick off the greatest redemption story of all time – or for that matter of eternity.

Introducing the Specifics of Serpentine Strategy, and Exposing the Components of 'Serpent Speak'

The Holy One is all about action. The serpent is all about attitudes and concepts and ideologies and philosophies and theories and opinions. The Holy One is all about empowerment, inspiration, and blessing. The serpent is all about cynicism, sarcasm, and negative chatter. Keep these basic differences in mind, Dear Reader.

If you do, you will save yourself and your family members a lot of pain and grief.

The serpent is going to initiate a conversation with Chava. He is going to lay a trap for her with one of his primary weapons – cynicism - and she is going to step squarely in the middle of the trap. He will use cynicism and his other favorite tools of deception – stimulation of fleshly appetites, sarcasm, misinformation aimed at the weak areas of the human mind, accusation, self-serving rhetoric, and emotional manipulation - to get her confused and disoriented, and then actually make her believe – temporarily at least – that the Holy One’s instructions for human life on planet earth were meant to do human beings *harm* and not *good*. This will then actually induce Chava [and, ultimately, Adam as well] to leave the pathway of life, health, peace and blessing that comes with *sh’ma*-ing the Holy One’s wise and loving instructions. He will push all the right buttons, in just the right sequence. He will attack her first through the weakness of fleshly appetites. He will then attack her at the weakest and most vulnerable areas of her mind – *i.e.* reliance upon logic, reasoning, philosophy, opinion, religious principle, and ideas regarding ‘fairness’ and ‘morality’. And then he will strike the crippling blow at her greatest point of weakness – which the Holy One has designed to serve as mankind’s greatest area of strength - her mouth and faculties of communication and influence. He will turn her mouth and skills of communication against the male of her species – and will actually use her to attack, distract, seduce, and disempower him. She who was designed by the Holy to function as an *ezer kenegdo* – *i.e.* a suitable helpmate – for man will develop an alter ego as a *femme fatale*. And the man, who was designed to operate as the shadow of the Holy One, introducing Him and His Heavenly Ways upon the earth, will develop an alter ego as the *serpent’s pawn*. That is not how the story is going to end, of course. Torah is not a tragedy – it is a love story. Love will win out in the end.

Ah, but we are getting *way, way ahead of ourselves*. There is no need to hurry. Why don’t we just go back and start at the beginning of the story?

The Great Expose’

Adam and Chava tasted the sweetness of Eden. But they knew nothing else. And that is the rub. For you see, the Eternal One deserves to have – and must have - a people who, having full knowledge of all the alternative lifestyles and pleasures they could seek, voluntarily and wholeheartedly choose Him – and His Way - instead. In order for His Glory to be revealed, and for true love to come forth, He and His Ways must be chosen over all other lovers and over every alternative lifestyle offered by the world in which we live. The Holy One does not want robots. He does not want blind followers. He does not want us to cling to Him out of ignorance of any other way. He wants us to know our options – and choose Him

over them all. He knows that if we are not exposed to serious tests, to very real temptations, to powerful seductions, to the sensual pull of our own fleshly desires, and to the intoxicating mind-game of serpentine logic, reason, opinion, and morality – well, if we are not exposed to those things, no commitment we make to serve Him will be an informed, trustworthy, real, or reliable one.

So, without any qualifying introduction or explanation whatever, Torah confronts us - and an unsuspecting and quite unprepared Adam and Chava - with someone (or something) that seems to our way of thinking totally out of place in the Holy One's garden. Here is the opening line of today's aliyah as we commonly read it in English:

*Now the serpent was more subtle
than any animal of the field which the Lord God had made.
[Genesis 3:1]*

Who, our inquiring minds want to know, *is* this creature which Torah - as we read it in English - calls '*the serpent*'? From whence did this creature come? If the Eternal One created this 'serpent', what on earth or in Heaven did He create him/it for? And what, pray tell, is this serpent *doing* strolling around the Holy One's beautiful garden of delight where Adam and Chava are bound to eventually bump into him/it? The answers to those questions may just surprise you.

What would happen, do you think, if we try to set aside our pre-suppositions about the serpent that shows up in the Garden of Eden and see what Torah really teaches us about him/it? First of all, let us look at the name Torah gives this creature. Please note that he/it is nowhere called '*Satan*' [or Ha-Satan] by the Torah. Neither does the Torah identify him/it as a '*fallen angel*'. Neither does Torah call him/it '*Lucifer*', or 'the Devil'. Nor does Torah in any way associate the serpent with the 'chief musician of Heaven' as some denominations teach today. Our English translations of the Torah refer to the one who converses with Chava in the passage we are studying simply - and exclusively - as '*the serpent*'.

Of course, one of the givens under which we operate is that the Torah predated the English language by several millennia, so it could not have been written in English. It was, instead, written in the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew of Torah the 'thing' that suddenly appears in our garden and seemingly causes all the trouble, is called *ha-nachash*³. The Hebrew word *nachash* is the noun form of a Hebrew verb meaning *to hiss* or *to whisper*⁴. The verb can also, by implication, mean to *practice*

³ *Nachash* is a noun made up of the Hebrew consonants *nun*, *chet*, *shin*. Strong's Hebrew word #5175, this noun is pronounced *naw-khawsh*.

⁴ See Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (1979), page 544, regarding Strong's Hebrew word #5172.

*enchantment, to use sorcery, to augur or divine*⁵.

The one we have, by tradition, come to call the ‘serpent’, it appears, had *knowledge* – but alas, it was knowledge that did not descend from Heaven. I suspect the serpent must have spent a lot of time hanging around – and eating heaping helpings of the fruit of - the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

The Chief Characteristic of the Serpent - ‘Subtlety’

The Torah only employs one adjective with which to describe the serpent. In English that adjective is usually translated as ‘subtle’, or ‘crafty’. The Hebrew word so translated is *arom*⁶. Strong’s suggests that this word literally means merely *prudent, shrewd, or sensible*. See e.g. **Proverbs 14:8**:

*The wisdom of the prudent [arom] is to think about his way,
But the folly of fools is deceit.*

And see also Proverbs 22:3:

*A prudent [arom] man sees danger and hides himself;
But the simple pass on, and suffer for it.*

It should also be noted however that the Hebrew adjective *arom* is composed of the exact same Hebrew consonants, in the exact same order, as the word that was translated as ‘naked’ in the last verse of chapter 2, describing Adam and Chava in their blissful state⁷. Our English Bibles translated the descriptive term as ‘naked’. It would be altogether permissible, it would seem, to translate the Hebrew adjective *arom* as applied to the serpent in the same way as it was translated when applied to Adam and Chava. That would cause us to see the serpent not as ‘crafty’, but as ‘covering-less’, or ‘naked’. This is at least true in the sense of his/its being *hair-less, fur-less, and shell-less*.

The ‘covering-less’ interpretation appears particularly appropriate in light of the fact that the serpent’s *arom-ness* is described by Torah not in general, but in specific comparison to the [other?] *animals ‘of the field’*. The other animals of the field all have either hair, fur, shells or some other covering. In comparison, the serpent, which has no such covering, can truly be said to be ‘*arom*’.

⁵ See Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (1979), page 545, regarding Strong’s Hebrew word #5172.

⁶ The Hebrew adjective *arom* is Strong’s Hebrew word #6175. Made up of the consonants *ayin, resh, vav, mem sofit*, it is pronounced *aw-room*’.

⁷ In an article entitled “*Serpents of desire: Good and evil in the Garden of Eden — The Naked Truth*”, Rabbi David Fohrman says: ‘At first glance, the ideas “naked” and “cunning” don’t seem to have much in common. But on reflection, they *do* seem related in a curious way. Mull the terms over — “Naked and cunning, naked and cunning...” — what comes to mind? These words just happen to be opposites of one another. When someone is naked, unclothed, there is no hiding. That person’s “self” is laid bare for all to see.” See <http://jewishworldreview.com/1104/fohrman5.php3>

Wait a Minute! From Whence Cometh this Serpent?

Let us look back a few verses to see where this ‘naked’ [or, if you prefer, *subtle*] thing came from. In chapter 1, verses 24-25, we are told that early on the sixth day of Creation:

*God said, "Let the eretz bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, creeping things, and animals of the eretz after their kind," and it was so.
God made the animals of the eretz after their kind,
and the cattle after their kind,
and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind.
God saw that **it was good** [Hebrew, *tov*].*

Was the serpent a ‘*living creature*’ [Hebrew, *nefesh chayah*] brought forth from the *eretz* by the Holy One on the sixth day? If so, the one thing we know is that his/its coming forth was seen by the Holy One as ‘*tov*’ – *good*, and *bringing forth good in ever-increasing quantities*. That is not quite the image of the serpent we have come to expect. Perhaps the Holy One’s perspective is a little different from ours, eh?

We also know that, if the serpent was a Genesis 1:24-25 ‘*living creature*’, He was specifically brought into the garden – to Adam – not by some sinister force – BUT BY THE HOLY ONE Himself! In chapter 2, verses 19–20, we are told:

*Out of the eretz the Holy One Elohim formed
every animal of the field and every bird of the sky,
and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.
Whatever the man called every living creature [Hebrew, *nefesh chayah*],
that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle,
and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field.*

In light of this we know that contrary to popular theology Adam had been introduced by the Holy One to the serpent well prior to the events we are reading about in chapter 3. Adam had, in fact, long prior to this encounter, come to know the serpent well enough, at least, to give it its name. It was, after all, Adam who called him/it *nachash* – *hisser*.

The serpent of Genesis 3 was merely one of the Eternal One’s stable of created beings. He/it is not the Eternal One’s equal, nor even His nemesis. And here is the most startling revelation of all – the presence of this serpent in the garden was *just as much a part of the will of the Holy One as was Adam and Chava’s presence there*. The Eternal One *planned and orchestrated* the encounter. The Eternal One *brought the serpent into Adam and Chava’s frame of reference* on purpose. And the Eternal One has taught Adam all he needs to know to *deal with this serpent appropriately* to *subdue him/it*, and to *rule over him/it*. All Adam has to do to make

this happen is *sh'ma*⁸ the Holy One's instructions. What could be so hard about that?

Is The Serpent of Genesis 3 a Fallen Angel?

Of course, we are all familiar with the book of Revelation, where Ha-Satan – the Adversary - is referred to as *that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan*. Revelation 20:2. We have all read Revelation 12:9 where we are told that “*he was cast out into the earth, and his angels* [the word just means ‘messengers’, not necessarily supernatural beings] *were cast out with him*”.

We have assumed – and been taught - that the *nachash* of Genesis 3 is the same *serpent* described in Revelation 12 and 20 – and is thus identical to ‘the Devil’, and Satan’ which we read about in Luke 4 [the wily one who tested Yeshua in the desert], Romans 16:20 [whom the God of peace will soon crush under our feet], and I Peter 5:8 [like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour] among other passages in the apostolic writings. But are we justified in this assumption, or in accepting this teaching at face value?

It is a question worth asking. One purpose of this study is to stir you to ask such questions for yourself, and pray through them, rather than just blindly accepting teachings and theologies based solely on the application of human logic.

I will not try to answer that important question for you. I will leave it to you to study it out and decide for yourself. I will proceed onward to the confrontation between the serpent, Chava [Eve] and Adam.

Please note that there are *seven distinct phases of this encounter*. It starts with distraction. This leads to confusion. This results in deception. This cultivates

⁸ The Hebrew verb *sh'ma* [*shin, mem, ayin*, Strong's Hebrew word #8085] is one of the most frequently encountered verbs in the Bible. Sometimes translated “*he listens*”, sometimes “*he hears*”, and sometimes “*he obeys*”, this verb describes the proper response of man to the Voice of the Creator. The Hebrew verb *sh'ma*, however, means much more than either to listen or to hear, or even to obey. It means to totally restructure one's life based solely upon what one has heard, forsaking all other ways besides that way explicitly spoken by he who has spoken. An example of what it means to *sh'ma* is found in the way a mother of a newborn baby responds when her baby cries in the night. No matter how tired the mother is, or how inconvenient it may be, or who may tell her to “*just let the baby cry, it will be alright*”, a mother is driven to respond, and does respond. Her reaction to the baby's cry is a *sh'ma* response. She knows her baby's voice. When she hears it, she drops everything and responds. Why does she do this? Because she fears the baby? No. Because she wants to make the baby love her more? No. She responds simply because of the depth of the relationship – the bond – she has with the baby. In the case of Torah, the speaker we are to *sh'ma* is, of course, the Holy One and no other. We are to *sh'ma* the Holy One's voice the way the mother responds to her baby's cry – drop everything, listen to no other counsel, and respond appropriately, in a manner consistent with the relationship.

obsession. This causes depression, oppression, and ultimately, the suppression of purpose, destiny, mission, and calling.

The Prophetic and Prototypical Nature of the Orchestrated Confrontation In the Garden

Keep in mind that the Eternal One not only *foreknew* and *allowed* the confrontation about which we read in Genesis 3 but deliberately *precipitated it*. Though He knew full well that it is occurring – and even by reason of His omniscience *knew full well its outcome* – but knowing all this full well, *He did not intervene*. The Eternal had a purpose, and a long-term plan, you see, for *even this*.

Those who choose to love the Creator and trust Him of their own free will must be able to recognize and deal effectively with ***distraction***. We are called to ***sh'ma*** the Voice of our Creator; but we have ears that can receive salutation and stimulation from other voices as well.

1. Our Basic Introduction to the Phenomenon of ‘Serpent Speak’

The confrontation begins with something that seems odd to us – the serpent *speaks*. Heretofore Torah has only reported the Holy One and Adam as having the power of speech. Some find it strange – indeed, incredible – that a serpent could speak like a man. I would like to explain it to you – but I cannot. Perhaps in the garden prior to the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil all animals could speak. Or perhaps in that pristine environment man could understand the sounds made by animals intuitively. After all, when the Holy One wills it donkeys can prophesy, rocks can cry out, rivers can dance, and the trees of the field can clap their hands.

2. Quibbling Over – and Building Fences Around - the Torah

The serpent – perhaps given voice for the occasion by the Holy One Himself - speaks:

*He said to the woman, So, has God said,
'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'*

This is of course a trick question. First of all, as aforesaid, whatever the Holy One said about what Adam and Chava should and should not eat, what business is that of the serpent? Secondly, note how the serpent subtly turns the Holy One's approach to life instructions a full 180 degrees. The Holy One had phrased His instructions for Adam to have a long and meaningful life in the Garden in a very positive and freedom-emphasizing way, saying: ***Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*** Genesis 2:16-17. The serpent adopted a very negative-energy approach – focusing not on the vast array of

options for food the Holy One gave Adam, but *on the sole and simple exception*.

Chava is flattered, it appears, by being asked the question. She immediately thinks herself superior to – wiser, and more spiritual than - the serpent. She overthinks, and thereby allows herself to be sucked into the serpent's trap. Without even considering passing the issue on to either Adam or the Holy One for counsel, she decides on her own to become the serpent's 'teacher'. She decides that she needs to educate this inferior, misinformed novice.

Chava therefore assumes an air of independence, engages the serpent in discourse, corrects him – and casts pearls, as it were, before swine.

The woman said to the serpent, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

All the Holy One had actually said concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that man was not to *eat* of it lest he die. He had never decreed that man should not *touch* that fruit. Why, then, did Chava feel she had to add to the Holy One's instruction? Was Chava adding 'traditions of men' to the instructions of the Holy One? Was she just bloviating? Whatever Chava thought she was doing, what she was accomplishing was getting herself into a world of trouble. She was wandering off into the dangerous realm of abstract 'theology'. But that is the serpent's natural habitat and environment – not man's. And so, with each step Chava took in that direction she got further and further out of rhythm with the Holy One's heartbeat - and further and further *out of touch with the Holy One's actual words*.

What Chava succeeded in doing was proving that the words of life the Holy One had spoken to Adam back in Genesis 2 were not *real* to her. They had not *entered into her innermost being*. They had not *transformed her*. They were not *functioning as prophetic, creative, energy in her*. To the contrary, they had become to her merely a convenient framework upon which to build *doctrines* and *theologies* and what she envisioned, in her human mind, as a plausible system of *halakah*.

The serpent was not, of course, impressed one whit by Chava's theological dissertations. Nor is he impressed with yours or mine. Serpents, you see, don't care about what *doctrines* human beings fancy themselves to hold to. Nor does he care what *theologies* human beings can expound. Nor does he get concerned at all about what verses – or whole books - of Scripture human beings can quote, or what soaring rhetoric they can speak. In an instant a serpent can spot the difference between a person who bases just has a creed or belief system and a person who

intimately knows, faithfully served, humbly follows, and instinctively passes every situation and question of life through the Eternal One before even forming an opinion, much less speaking, acting, reacting, or responding.

The Serpent apparently had eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil many times – and from ingesting that fruit had come to know that while Chava spoke with what sounded like conviction and authority she simply *did not know what she was talking about*. The Serpent knew that Chava was just *mouth*ing spiritual-sounding words, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing. He knew that *she did not speak with the authority of the Holy One*. He knew that *her heart was not beating in rhythm with the Holy One's*. He knew that *the breath of life the Holy One had breathed into her had been allowed to grow stale*. Recognizing all this, the Serpent knew that Chava was, for those reasons, *absolutely helpless against his cunning*.

Take note, Beloved. It is much better to know and admit that we are ignorant, and to therefore walk humbly, but in reliance upon the Holy One, than to wrongly presume we are wise, and therefore speak and act presumptuously. But back to our story. Now that the serpent had Chava's undivided attention, and had found her point of vulnerability, it was time for him to move in for 'the kill'.

The serpent said to the woman, "You won't surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

What the serpent said this time, of course, made perfect sense. Serpent-speak starts out sounding radical and outrageous, but then it quickly takes on an air of *logic, reason, and fleshly appeal*. The serpent, you see, plays to the pseudo-intellectual vulnerability of man – that part of us that tends to confuse information with revelation, opinion with truth, entertainment with inspiration, word play with wisdom, shortsightedness with science, and foolishness with logic. Wherever in the world you see either foolishness or logic being utilized, therefore, be assured the serpent is there, lurking, ready to strike. He knows that humans who are particularly fond of either foolishness or logic are easy prey.

In this case the reasoning of the Serpent goes like this:

Point #1: Man [not his Creator or His Creator's Plan!] is what creation is all about.

Point #2: Since man is what creation is all about, man deserves to know the difference between good and evil.

Point #3: Man just needs a little more information, a little more education, a little more perspective, a little more sensual experience, for man to be at least equal – if not superior - to God.

Point #4: If he is equal to God, man can live solely for his own purposes, seeking to accomplish his own will.

Furthermore the Serpent implied that human beings could best live fulfilled lives by *looking inside themselves* and *sh'ma-ing* [i.e. listening to and heeding] *the voice of their desires*. The essence of the serpent's message is very simple - that man should *follow his heart* and *fleshly appetites* – not the words of the Holy One.

The Dangerous Side of the Knowledge of 'Good' and 'Evil'

The Holy One had not hidden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from Adam and Chava. He had placed it in the middle of the garden. The Holy One had not put angels with flashing swords around the tree, to prevent access. Nor had he concealed the fact that the tree was a 'delight to the eyes' or that it would 'make one wise'. The Holy One had instead provided Adam and Chava with all the information needed to make a choice. And He had given them something precious – a specific word of instruction from His own lips. He had very clearly instructed Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And He had told him specifically what would happen to man if he ate of that fruit – in that day, man would surely die. But Chava did not *internalize* the Holy One's words. She did not write it on her heart. She did not speak of it as she lay down and as she rose up, as she sat in her home, and as she walked by the way.

What did Chava do with the Holy One's word? She *memorized it*. She *applied it intellectually*, and *turned it into a doctrine*. She *added meaningless words to it*. And she thereby *denied it any real meaning or power in her life*. Hence, Chava threw it away ... for a piece of fruit ... and a *serpent's song*.

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for ingesting,
and that it was pleasurable to the eyes,
and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,
she took of the fruit of it, and ate;
and she gave some to her husband with her, and he ate⁹.*

[Genesis 3:6]

Good/delightful for ingesting? Pleasurable to the eyes? To be desired to make one wise? Ah, Dear One – those are supposed to be the descriptions of the Words of the Holy One our God!

An Eye-Opening Experience

Torah tells us that after first Chava, then Adam, ingested the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

V'tipakachnah eynei sh'neihem
Both of their eyes were opened,

vayede'u ki eyrumim hem

and they knew that they were eyrumim [naked? subtle?].

[Genesis 3:7(a)]

The immediate effect of Adam and Chava's ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a vastly *different perspective*. Before ingesting the fruit, Adam and Chava had a very good self-image. They were perfect creations of the Holy One, made in His image, according to His likeness, and fully empowered by Him to accomplish His purposes. After ingesting the fruit, however, they did not see it that way. They looked at themselves through eyes that, for the first time, saw evil. They did not just see it, however – they FIXATED on it. Seeing evil, they could no longer see good. This was the deception. The weakness of man is that, seeing evil, man tends to obsess over it. As a result, his ability to see the potential for greatness in, and the essential goodness, of, himself, in and of his fellow man, in and of Creation, and in and of the Holy One, is lost. The moment men see evil, and focus on it, their vision of good is correspondingly occluded.

And so, seeing evil for the first time, Adam and Chava, became obsessed by it. They forgot everything they knew about the goodness of the Holy One –and His grand plan for them. They immediately looked for something that would cover up the evil that they saw – all the while preserving it for them to fixate on. They put on fig leaves. They hid behind trees. They went dark – and they absorbed the dark energy of accusation, shame, blame, cynicism, depression, fear, and hopelessness.

Torah tells us:

vayitpeiru aleh te'edah

They sewed fig leaves together,

vaya'asu lahem chagorot

and made themselves aprons.

[Genesis 3:7(b)]

I don't blame Adam and Chava for fixating on the negative of course. I think we all know how they felt – and have done the same thing many times.

Don't forget, Dear Reader, that Torah tells us that every fruit produced by a tree the Holy One created contained a seed, capable of reproducing itself. That includes, of course, the tree of the knowledge of *tov v'ra*. When Adam and Chava ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of *tov v'ra*, what do you think happened to the seed of that fruit? They ingested it, and they thereby became the womb for the nurturing of the seed of that fruit. They became the vehicle, as it were, for the

reproduction of that seed, and the agents for the dispersion of fixation upon *ra* throughout the earth.

What Fig Leaves Cannot Cover

Fig leaves? Why did Adam and Chava choose *fig leaves* of all things? Figs were one of the things they were given to eat. So were dates and pomegranates, and all other sweet and delectable fruits that were nothing but good. Fig leaves were a representation of the goodness of the fruit the tree from which they grew produced. But leaves – even of a good tree – are just outer manifestations. Leaves are not fruit. See **Matthew 21:19**. Leaves never substitute for fruit. Nor can they cover up the dark kind of nakedness comes from *lo sh'ma*-ing [i.e., refusing to receive, accept, and order their lives according to] the Eternal One's instructions for living. Covering that very, very kind of nakedness will take something significantly more substantial. But we will get to that later. It will be revealed in the due course of the Eternal One's appointed time.

The Appointed Time for Breathing

Knowing His creation was *reeling* and needed Him desperately, the Eternal One came running. He initiated something we will see over and over again in Torah, and throughout the history of man – something I call a 'God encounter'. Noach knew about God encounters, and lived by them. So did Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Y'hoshua, Sh'muel [Samuel] – and the list goes on. God encounters are the natural outgrowth of the passionate pursuit of man by the Holy One.

Expect God encounters, Dear Reader. Trust them. Leave room in your life and theology for them. Surrender to them. And when they come, accept the discipline, surrender the forbidden fruit and its seed, receive the forgiveness, and get on with the purpose and destiny for which you were created.

Here is Torah's description of the first ever God encounter in Scripture:

*They heard the sound of the Holy One Elohim walking in the garden at **l'ruach ha-yom** [the time appointed for breathing][KJV, in the 'cool of the day'] And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Holy One Elohim among the trees of the garden.*

*The Holy One Elohim called to the man, and said to him, "**Where are you?**"*

Adam and Chava ran. They hid. What did the Eternal One do? He did not fly off into a rage. He did not strike them dead. He did not even expose them. The Eternal One allowed the little drama to play its way out. He had not come to the Garden to hurt them. He had, instead, come to bring them *redemption*. He had come to the Garden to wipe the dirt off of them, then again draw them close to Him, face to Face, as He had in Genesis 2:7, and to again breathe *nish'mat chayim* [the breath of

life] into them, giving them new life.

After all, the Eternal One had warned Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the day that he ate thereof, he would ‘surely die’. In other words, in the day Adam ate of that tree, the breath of life the Eternal One had breathed into him in Genesis 2:6 would ‘expire’ – that very day! That, I believe, is why the Eternal One came to the garden that day.

The Eternal One knew – because He is omniscient, and lives outside of time – that Adam would eat, did eat, and had eaten of the fruit of the tree. He, knew, therefore, that Adam would now ‘surely die’ – *unless* He Himself gave Adam a new breath of life – a resurrection, as it were, to bring the Divine spark of life back to him. Hence, I believe the Torah tells us that the Eternal One came to the Garden, and sought Adam, at ‘*l’ruach ha-yom*’, which someone once poetically translated into English as ‘*the cool of day*’, but which literally means at ‘*at the appointed time for breathing*’.

A Prophetic Picture of Resurrection

And so understand Beloved that the Eternal One has been telling us since Torah was given that He has appointed a time to renew for the creature called man the *ruach* – the breath of life. He has appointed a time when He will take the man in His arms again, as He had at the first, and breathe into him once again the precious breath of life. And in so doing, he will bring the dead back to life. Yes, I am speaking of an appointed time for the resurrection of the dead. The Hebraic picture of resurrection life is deeply embedded in the fabric of Torah. Ah but alas, neither Adam nor Chava were ready to receive redemption, or cleansing, or new life, from the Eternal One just yet. They *ran*, and they *tried to hide* [as if that were possible]. And, like most of us today, they *refused that which they needed most* – the Eternal One’s discipline and restoration. And even when they realized they could not hide from the Eternal One what they had done, they tried making excuses rather than *t’shuvah* [return to the Eternal One, seeking forgiveness, cleansing, transformation, and restoration].

Adam blamed the Eternal One for giving him the woman. Then he blamed the woman. She, in turn, blamed the serpent. So it was in the garden. And so it goes today. And what is the result? Here is what Torah tells us:

The Holy One Elohim said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above every animal of the field. On your belly shall you go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. I will build up an enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

Hu yeshufecha rosh - i.e. *He will bruise your head,*
v'ata teshufeinu akev - i.e. *and you will bruise his heel."*

To the woman he said,

***"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bring forth children.
Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."***

To Adam He said,

***'Because you have sh'ma-ed [listened to, agreed with, and heeded]
your wife's voice, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you saying,
"You are not to eat of it',
cursed is the ground for your sake. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.
Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you; and you will eat the herb of the field.
By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken.***

ki-afar atah v'el-afar t'shuv

[For you are dust, and to dust you will return]

Judgment – righteous judgment. But not, please note, judgment without mercy. Redemptive judgment. Judgment with HOPE built into. In fact, if you look closely you will see that contained within each judgment stated above is *at least one aspect of pure mercy*. Let's look for a few moments at the *positive side* of what theologians call 'the curses' of Genesis 3. First of all, note that the Eternal One did not destroy, or change His plans for, any of the creatures or people involved in the incident. No destinies were changed. No gifts or callings were revoked. The Eternal One merely modified, and placed limits on, the ability of those involved to experience and personally enjoy the fulfillment of those plans.

What do I mean? Let's consider the Serpent first. The serpent would not walk upright, it is true. But he/it would still move about freely. Moreover, he/it would still be allowed a place in the Eternal One's Creation and in the Eternal One's Plan for mankind. In addition, the Eternal One would even still provide his/its food. How about the woman, Chava? The woman would indeed feel pain, and it would be severe. But she would still bring forth children, and would still participate in the Divine Plan for mankind to 'be fruitful and multiply. Yes, she would have pain – but that was simply the consequence of knowing good and evil. And, indeed, she would – despite (or perhaps, in the Eternal One's economy because of) her disobedience - bear the seed of Messiah which would ultimately make manifest to everyone the redemption the Holy One had initiated this encounter to accomplish.

The man would have to work the soil, and toil and sweat. Yet, he would still have dominion over the Eternal One's creation, and would still rule over the earth.

Some read the 'curses' passage and shudder at how devastating the Eternal One's judgments are. I on the other hand read the same passage, and my heart proclaims:

“Amazing Grace - how sweet the sound!”

The First and Prototypical Provision of Kippur - Covering

The story concludes with an astonishing statement:

Vaya'as Adonai Elohim L'Adam ul'ishto kotnot ohr

God made garments of light for Adam and his wife.

v'yal'bishem

and He clothed them

[Genesis 3:21]

Fig leaves did not cover Adam and Chava's nakedness. Only garments of *ohr* – light - could do that. But the Eternal One, it seems, had that all *worked out all along*. Oh, where did He get these garments you ask? Though Torah leaves that question unanswered, I believe we are finally told in Revelation 13:8. There the Messiah -the central figure of the Revelation Narrative - is described as *a Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world*. Welcome to perhaps the greatest mystery of all Holy Writ, Dear One. May you learn to be a good and faithful steward of this great mystery!

Questions for Today's Study

1. What does Sefer *B'reshit* tell us about the Serpent [whom we know as Ha-Satan]?
2. Re read Genesis 1:28. What was to be the relationship between man and the Serpent?
3. Read each of the Serpent's statements to Chava [Eve] [vv. 1, 4-5]. What part of what he said was false?
4. What things did Chava rely upon in deciding to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge?
5. After the sin of Adam and Chava, the Eternal One pronounced three separate curses: one on the Serpent, one on Chava, and one on Adam. List the elements or parts of each of these three curses.
6. This week's Haftarah is taken from the 42nd and 43rd chapters of *Yeshayahu [Isaiah]*, and deals with the events that will accompany the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel – i.e. the salvation of the Hebrew peoples - from all 12 tribes. In the days of restoration, Yeshayahu prophesies, the Eternal One will again, as at the 'Beginning', *directly intervene* in the affairs of the world - and will thereby *make His wonders and His power known*.

In today's aliyah Yeshayahu first discusses the aftermath of the Eternal One's

intervention – after He again dries up rivers to let His people cross dry shod, and after He again supernaturally leads His people with pillar and cloud. First of all, Yeshayahu describes the effect this will have on the peoples of the earth who have attacked and pursued His people:

*They will be turned back/taken aback;
they will be utterly disappointed, who trust in engraved images,
who tell molten images, “You are our gods”.*

[Isaiah 42:17]

Then Yeshayahu turns his attention to Israel [the Hebrew peoples whom the Eternal One has marvelously saved], and in the name of the Eternal One notes their reaction:

Ha-chershim sh'ma'u

The deaf sh'ma [hear];

Vha-iverim ha-bitu lir'ot

and the blind look and see.

Mi iver ki im-avdi

Who is as blind as my servant?

V'cheresh kemal'achi eshlach

or as deaf as my messenger whom I send?

mi iver kimeishulam

Who is as blind as he who is at shalom,

v'iver k'eved Adonai

and blind as the Holy One's servant?

Ra'ot rabot v'lo tish'mor

You see much, but don't sh'mar [observe].

pakoach oznayim v'lo yish'ma

His ears are open but he doesn't sh'ma [hear].

Adonai chafetz l'ma'an tzidko

It pleased the Holy One, for his righteousness' sake,

Yag'dil torah v'yadir

to magnify the Torah, and bring it to honored status.

[Isaiah 42:18-21]

[A] What does Yeshayahu prophesy will be the reaction of the peoples of the world who have hated and pursued Israel to the Eternal One's miraculous deliverance of Ya'akov's descendants in the early days of restoration?

[B] What does Yeshayahu prophesy will be the first reaction of Israel to the Holy One's miraculous deliverance of Ya'akov's descendants in the early days of restoration?

[C] What does Yeshayahu say the Eternal One will do concerning the Torah – and cause men to do concerning the Torah – in the early days of the restoration

of Israel?

[D] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the Hebrew verbs translated by our English Bibles in verse 21 as 'magnify' and 'make honorable' [KJV, 'honourable']. Write these Hebrew verbs in Hebrew letters, with appropriate vowel markings, and in their English transliterations. Study the verb roots in Gesenius. Then describe for each verb the Hebraic word picture you see developing concerning that verb.

7. In today's reading from the Apostolic Scriptures we are introduced to a man named *Yochanan* [our English Bibles attribute to him the English name "John"]. Yochanan was a cousin of Yeshua, six months older. His unique mission on earth was to call people to make *mikveh* [self-immense] in the Jordan River in preparation for receiving the Messiah and returning to the Torah lifestyle in its fullness. Various adapted forms of this self-immersion – completely divorced from the Hebraic root of *mikveh* – and given the name 'baptism' [from the Greek *baptizmo*] - have been incorporated into Christian worship practices over the centuries. Now is not the time, and this study is not the place, to discuss the contrasts between contemporary Christian forms of 'baptism' and the '*mikveh*' known to Yochanan, Yeshua, and the First Century *talmidim* [disciples, students, apprentices], but I recommend the reader study out the Biblical and traditional *mikveh* procedure on his or her own time.

Yochanan appeared on the scene in Israel before Yeshua began His public 'ministry'. Today's aliyah tells us the following about Yochanan:

*There came a man, sent from God, whose name was Yochanan.
The same came as a witness, that he might testify about the light [Hebrew, **ohr**],
that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but was sent that he might testify about the light [Hebrew, **ohr**].
The true light that enlightens everyone was coming into the world.*

[John 1:6-9]

Today's aliyah then turns its attention to the Messiah, Yeshua of *Natzeret* [Nazareth], and tells us, concerning Him:

*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him,
and the world didn't recognize Him.
He came to His own, and those who were His own didn't receive Him.
But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become God's children,
to those who believe¹⁰ in His name¹¹:*

¹⁰ The use of the English word 'believe' to translate this concept has long been recognized as problematic. What is involved is not an intellectual assent, or opinion as to truth; instead, what is necessary is a complete submission and surrender of the will to Messiah's teaching, involving a dramatic change of direction, speech, deeds, and attitudes to make them come into line with Messiah's teaching.

¹¹ In Hebraic thought the 'Name' of anything is much more than a title – it refers to the essence of the thing [or person] in question. Simply mentally agreeing or opining that Yeshua is the name of the

who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[John 1:10-13]

[A] What does this passage mean when it says that Yochanan was ‘sent from God’? [Hint: go back and read the account of Yochanan’s conception and birth, in the book of Lukas (Luke)]?

[B] What does this passage mean when it says that those who ‘received’ Messiah, and ‘believed in His Name’ were ‘born of God’ [v. 13]? Hint: read ahead to John 3, where Yeshua discusses being ‘*begotten from above*’ [KJV, ‘born again’] with Nicodemus].

[C] In Strong’s look up the Greek verbs that our English Bibles translate as ‘received’ and ‘believed’ in verse 12. Write those Greek verbs and the definitions given them by Strong’s. Then, look up in Strong’s usages of the English words ‘receive’ and ‘believe’ prior to Matthew, and try to figure out which Hebrew verbs would correspond to the Greek verbs you found. Finally, look up those Hebrew verbs in Gesenius, write those verbs in Hebrew letters, with vowel markings, and describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing with regard to each.

*May the Holy One cause the Torah to be magnified, in our lives, and in the world,
And may we all be born of God in Messiah.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Study

Job 36:22-31

Behold, God is exalted in his power.

Who is a teacher like him? Who has prescribed his way for him?

Or who can say, “You have committed unrighteousness?”

“Remember that you magnify his work, whereof men have sung.

All men have looked thereon. Man sees it afar off.

Behold, God is great, and we don’t know him.

The number of his years is unsearchable.

For he draws up the drops of water,

which distill in rain from his vapor,

which the skies pour down and drop on man abundantly.

Yes, can any understand the spreading of the clouds,

and the thunderings of his pavilion?

Behold, he spreads his light around him.

He covers the bottom of the sea.

For by these he judges the people.

He gives food in abundance.

Messiah is not at all what ‘*believ[ing] in His Name*’ involves. A more accurate English equivalent of the phrase written by Yochanan might be ‘*conform to His image*’, or ‘*line up their lives after His example.*’