Shiur L'Yom Revi'i[1]

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayetze***: **Genesis 29:31 - 30:24**
Haftarah: **Hosea 13:12-13**
B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:43-47**

And Leah conceived and bore a son ... .
[Genesis 29:32a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 85:8-9;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #4, *Ga'al* [*Kinsman-Redemption*]

Vayar Adonai ki-snu'ah Leah *– Then the Holy One saw that Leah was disfavored ...* ***vayiftach et-rachmah*** *– so He opened her womb ...* ***v'tahar Leah*** *– and Leah conceived.* **Genesis 29:31.**

Today's aliyah gives us the story of the '*The Holy One works all things together for good'* side of Ya'akov's treacherous season of exile in Paddan-Aram – as it chronicles the births of a dozen very special and gifted children into the Covenant household! Ya'akov faced many challenges during his 20-year sojourn in Laban's House of Horrors, but there were blessings, too – blessings that made it worth all the trouble and a whole lot more! Babies, babies everywhere! So welcome to the world, little Reuven, Sh'mon, Levi, and Yehudah! Shalom precious little Dan, Naftali, Gad, and Asher! How do you do Yissakhar, Zevulun, and Dinah? What do you want to be when you grow up, you beautiful child Yosef? Before we get too deep into the life stories of these destined-for-high-impact children, however, it probably behooves us to spend a few minutes talking about the troubling dynamics that attended these children's birth parents' downright scandalous 'marital/extramarital' arrangements.

Welcome to the Dark Energy World of 'Raging Nations' Coupling Arrangements

The announced plan of the Creator for human procreation clearly involves a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman, who both voluntarily leave/forsake intimacy with all others and faithfully cleave to their *beshert* [a Yiddish term meaning the opposite gender alter ego specimen who is Divinely selected/predestined for them to marry, raise a family, and grow old with]. The idea is for such a couple to spend years in exclusive relationship focusing on becoming *basar echad – i.e.* '*one flesh'*, or 'a *good-news testimony'*. But with the Fall, and the subsequent proliferation of ra, shachat, and chamas, this is seldom the way it

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happens. Alas, in the post-Babel era of *raging nations* and vain imagination-obsessed ethnicities, the Holy One's Brilliant Plan is given short shrift. The barking of sexual attraction, lust-related hormones and pheromones, romance-fantasy, competition for attention, and greed all make far more noise, and garner far more converts, than the still small whispers of the Creator and His Covenantal Calling. The heart wants what it wants, and the flesh craves what it craves, and most of humanity can't wait to hop on the first *third-rate romance/low-rent rendezvous bandwagon* that comes along, pay our fare, and go for the ride. So much for the Creator's Plan – and people wonder why there are so many failed marriages and dysfunctional homes, and so little *bayit shalom* – that beautiful, nurturing, soul-healing atmosphere of peace, wholeness, and wellbeing in the home and family which flows from walking in the Covenant and doing the Will of the Creator], more joy, and more solid, fruitful marriages.

Thus, in the dark-energy fueled world in which we live today, most people experience a succession of unfulfilling-if-not-destructive mating/cohabiting relationships. Too much intimacy too soon. Too much sexual stimulation, nowhere near enough conversation, prayer, shabbat-ing together, patient maturation, and collaboration relative to Torah's *mitzvot*.

Over-intimacy in general and over-emphasis on romantic feelings and sex in particular present many problems and challenges of course. But the problems and challenges that successive 'intimate relationships' present are nothing compared to the pitfalls of concurrent relationships. Sh'lomo [KJV 'Solomon'] famously taught his sons: *He who 'finds'*[2] *a wife finds* ***tov***; *and obtains* ***ratzon*** *– i.e. delight, pleasantness, goodwill, and favor - from the Holy One*. **Proverbs 18:22.** That is certainly true. But note carefully the *singular form of the word 'wife'* in this proverb. When it comes to wives, as Sh'lomo discovered the hard way, more is definitely not better. What happens to a man who finds himself with *two* wives? When he finds himself with two *sisters*, no less? What quality of life can Ya'akov expect to have when sharing limited space, unlimited time, kitchen, table, bed, currency, and nursery with two strong-willed *daughters traumatized by Laban from birth* in the dark arts of deception and manipulation? What could possibly be *tov* about a life with *two women* competing fiercely with each other over one man's *time, attention, affection, favor*, *mind, body,* and *money*? Is Ya'akov mature enough in the Covenant to see through the present state of these two women's

[2] The Hebrew verb that English translators have generally rendered as 'find' when translating this verse is *matza* [*mem, tzade, alef*], a verb which implies engaging in a journey, quest, or search, persevering through obstacles and challenges encountered along the way, and successfully concluding the journey, quest, or search and returning home with the prize or fulfilling experience that was sought, and having learned important lessons about life, gained insight into self, and acquired practical wisdom and understanding in the process.

dysfunction to the glorious, nurturing future for which the Holy One designed them and brought them into the world? Does he have vision – or patience – enough to look past their current childish control obsession to their vast, untapped 'woman of virtue' potential? Can he successfully referee their frequent and emotionally draining bouts of sisterly infighting long enough for them to develop a functional matriarchal skillset?

Being married to multiple women is *nobody's idea of tov.* Marriage is about two people – one male and one female – becoming one. You cannot become one with two people at the same time. Becoming one requires *total, exclusive commitment*, and *all-in investment*. It involves *forsaking all others*, and '*cleaving only'* to one other person. Ya'akov put himself in a very difficult situation. Yes, I said Ya'akov did that. I know it is easy to blame the situation on Laban, whose actions were certainly reprehensible, but do not forget that it was Ya'akov who made the choice to go forward with a second marriage - to Rachel - even after he was fully aware o Laban's deception. He could have annulled the marriage to Leah on the basis of fraud. He could have taken Leah and left Laban's employment. He did neither of these things. Moreover, he apparently did not even stop to consult the Holy One about what course of action he should take. He seems to have let his emotions and passions control his choices. We are all human, and therefore we all tend to fall into this kind of trap from time-to-time; alas, we soon discover that to make choices based on emotions and passions is not wisdom – but folly of the highest order.

Two wives was not what Yitzchak and Rivkah had in mind when they blessed Ya'akov and sent him away to Paddan-Aram to take <u>*a*</u> wife. **Genesis 28:1,6.** This dysfunctional family arrangement has all the makings of a *disaster*. This has got to be the work of a master manipulator, operating totally in the flesh! Let's see, who do we know that fits that description ... *LABAN!!!!!!*

When You Live In Someone Else's House, You Have to Live With Their Attitudes, Opinions, and Manipulations

Well, it <u>is</u> *Laban's house*. The owner of a house always gets to make the rules for everyone who enters it. He is the *strong man*. He can make the rules any way he wants, then turn around and apply and enforce them any way he sees fit. He can change the rules at will. He gets to write the script for every life form living under his roof. It is his way or the highway. Either jump when he says jump - or leave. And sometimes, leaving is not an option that we are ready, willing, or able to exercise. That is when a season of life becomes an 'exile' [Hebrew, *galut*]. Or a 'captivity' [Hebrew, *shebut*]. Or a 'holocaust' [Hebrew, *shoah*]. Or a 'tribulation' [Hebrew, *tzarah*]. *Que sera, sera – whatever will be, will be.*

In this age, at least, we are called to function as a counterculture, not a dominant culture. We are always in the minority, never the majority. We do not get to make the rules. We aren't called – much less empowered – to tell the dominant cultures of the world how they are supposed to think, to believe, to talk, to behave, to run their houses or nation, to spend their time, money, energy, or passion, to raise their families, or to live their lives. We can complain ... or sulk ... or accuse ... or throw a fit ... or stage a protest ... or start a riot … if we want, but we cannot change other people or the way they do what they do. That is not why we are here. We are not here as rulers – at least not yet. We are not even here as judges – at least not until Messiah establishes His Millennial Kingdom. We are here simply to *model and exemplify, and hopefully draw men to, the light* – not to wield light as a sword against people we catch doing bad things in the dark. It is, after all, *their 'house*' that we are living in. For now, at least. So, for now, we might as well *stay calm*, *stay focused on the mission to which we are called* - and do the best we can with whatever hand we are dealt. This is where trust comes in. We have to trust the Holy One to make everything – including *this ugly mess* that we have inherited from the Laban-like Cultures of our world - *beautiful in its time*. The Laban's of this world do what they do – but the Holy One always has a better plan, to turn everything around for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. As the Psalmist counsels us all:

Fret not because of evildoers!
***
Trust in the Holy One, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Holy One, and *[as, when, and to the extent you delight in Him]*
He will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Holy One, and also trust in Him,
and He will bring it to pass.
He will bring forth your tzedakah as the light, and your mishpat as the noonday.
Rest in the Holy One, and wait patiently upon Him;
do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.
Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;
do not fret – it only causes harm.
[Psalm 37:1-8]

Rest Assured: There is a Plan At Work That is Far More Powerful and World-Changing than Laban's Scheme

The Author of Torah is using the challenges of Ya'akov's odyssey to teach us critical lessons about our own lives – and the lives of our children and children's children. ***That which has been is that which will be; that which is done is that which will be done. There is nothing new under the sun***. **Ecclesiastes 1:9.**

As we rejoin the inspired narrative today, we see Ya'akov settling into a long, arduous season of indentured servitude in the house of Laban. Ya'akov does not know it yet, but he is the chosen 'asset' of the Creator of the Universe. He is a one-man *special forces* team. He thought he was running away from Esav – or going to find himself a wife. But that is not the real reason he is in Paddan-Arm. The real reason for his presence in that part of the world is to pull off a great rescue mission. He has, unbeknownst to him, been sent to redeem four young women from the dark energy cesspool of the ancient near East. These four women are named Rachel, Leah, Bilhah[3] and Zilpah[4]. The Holy One has plans for them – long-range plans for the greater good. Laban can scheme all he wants; but all his schemes are merely playing into the Holy One's greater plan.

Welcome to the Season of Ever-Encroaching Dark Energy

Beginning with last week's parsha – *Toldot* – Torah has been introducing us to a season of ever intensifying levels of *dark energy*. In *Toldot* we saw the dark side of both Rivkah's and Ya'akov's personality come to the fore. We saw that sons and daughters of the Covenant are by no means immune to the influence – or the devastating effects – of *dark energy*. In *Vayetze* – and again and again in parshot *Vayishlach, Vayashev, Miketz*, and *Vayigash* – we will see ever-increasing levels of dark energy adversely impacting the Covenant family. This is our season to learn from our patriarchs *the hard lessons of dark energy* – and how to overcome dark energy with appropriate levels of Divine Light. What is '*dark energy'*, you ask? Let's talk about it.

Defining 'Dark Energy'

Dark energy is that in life which evidences the absence of Divine Light. Dark energy is to our lives what *tohu v'vohu v'chosek* was to the Heavens and the earth before Genesis 1:3. Dark energy is the source and substance and sum total of everything the Serpent introduced to Chava in the Garden of Eden. Dark energy is that which leads to distraction from mission, confusion of identity and purpose, vanity, folly, meaninglessness, chaos, and overwhelm.

There are *vast pools of dark energy* in this world. Every ethnicity, culture, nation, generation, and neighborhood reeks of – and reels under the influence of – this plague. Each dark energy pool has a siren's song that will draw you into it - if you do not stay securely anchored in the realm of Divine Light.

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[3] Bilhah was Rachel's handmaid. When Rachel was unable to bear children, she gave Bilhah to Ya'akov as a concubine/surrogate mother. Bilhah was the birth mother of Dan and Naftali.

[4] Zilpah was Leah's handmaid. When Leah found herself unable for a time to bear any more children to Ya'akov, she gave Zilpah to Ya'akov as a concubine/surrogate mother. Zilpah was the birth mother of Gad and Asher.

Dark energy is found in all *unsurrendered appetites and urges.* The presence of dark energy is therefore manifested in any *over-indulgence in food, in drink*, in *entertainment,* or *in media*. Therefore, dark energy is the driving force in every *addictive behavior pattern*.

Dark energy is also present in every form of *self-obsession,* because self-obsession leads to *narcissism*, to *the adoption of false identities and masking behaviors*, to *bias, to prejudice*, and to *hate*. Dark energy is also present in every *over-valuation of material things*. Such over-valuation leads to *love of money*, to *greed*, to *deception*, to *competition,* to the *devaluing of human life and relationships*, and ultimately to *all forms of oppression*.

Dark energy also manifests in *unbridled carnal desire,* and quickly progresses to *lust*, then to *voyeurism,* and ultimately to narcissistic and destructive forms of *sexual experimentation and exploitation*. Dark energy raises its ugly head in every petty *irritation.* If it is indulged and left to fester it will progress to *aggravation,* to *anger,* to *offense*, to *outrage*, to *ranting,* to *unwillingness to forgive slights,* to *violence* [often in families] and to *a desire to see vengeance inflicted in the name of 'justice'*. Dark energy thrives in the realms of *foolish controversy, intellectual contentiousness, dissension, debate,* and *every form of personal and interpersonal drama.*

Dark energy is also found in *social isolation – i.e.* the adoption of a fortress or 'me-against-the-world' and 'the-world-against-me' mentality. Dark energy is also, however, found in the opposite extreme of social behavior – *i.e.* surrendering to the seduction of *groupthink*, *group dynamic*, *orthodoxy,* and to *sensitivity to public opinion* - whether this manifests in the form of adhering to *political correctness* or can take on the form and use the pulpit of either *populist, nationalist,* or *one-world-order rhetoric.*

Dark energy is the essence of *fear, bias, prejudice, hate, jealously, envy and outrage*. This kind of dark energy manifests in terror, in horror, in intimidation, in confusion, in anxiety, in worry, in stress, in murmur and complaint, in accusation and blame-casting, and in violence.

Dark energy is also the driving force behind *depression*. It manifests in each of depression's seven-sister emotional states: *despair, dissatisfaction, disappointment, sadness, melancholy, misery,* and *despondency.*

For Heaven's sake do not make navigation around such pools more difficult by embracing any of common *dark energy effect-enhancers* – things like alcohol,

illicit and prescription drugs, music, entertainment, gaming, gambling, sexual fantasy and experimentation, ideology, and institutional forms of education, philosophy, politics, and religion.

The Torah Narrative As A Fountain of Wisdom and Life

We have already discovered through these studies that deep levels of wisdom are found in every single patriarchal narrative. We will discover that the same holds true with regard to every single element of Torah's Instructions for Living. Torah is not an ordinary database of information that can be learned and mastered. Neither is Torah an ancient tome of religious literature to be incorporated into one's frame of reference along with other useful tidbits of learning. Nor is the calling of Torah an appeal to morality, ethics, logic, or philanthropy. Torah is an inexhaustible well of the wisdom of the Creator of the Universe. No human being can or will ever 'know' – much less 'fulfill' Torah. We can snorkel in its waters and explore exploring its treasures forever and never get beyond the wide-eyed novice stage. There are just as many overlapping veins of beauty, majesty, and creative genius to be found each time one reads one of narratives of patriarchal encounter and experience as there are layers of meaning within the first Divine phrase ever spoken – *i.e.* ***Yehi Ohr*** [Light *BE!*].

The wisdom just keeps unfolding. The mystery just keeps calling. And the delight just keeps building. Out of a sense of delicious overwhelm our quest in regard to these meditations has therefore centered around *two primary focuses*. First, we are very desirous of taking full advantage of this opportunity to *meet*, to *become personally acquainted with*, and *to surrender our lives and wills to* the particular manifestation of the Holy One which is being revealed in Torah as '*the God of Ya'akov'*. We have heretofore taken a similar approach relative to the manifestation of the Holy One revealed in Torah as '*the God of Avraham*" and with the manifestation of the Holy One which was revealed in Torah as "*the God of Yitzchak*"[5].

Second, we desire to glean from the covenant outworkings relative to our ancestor Ya'akov each and every *life-hack* the Holy One wills to teach us.

Signposts For Every Generation

We are coming to realize that the experiences of the patriarchs as recorded in Torah are not revealed to us merely as 'family history'. The things our ancestors experienced that are recorded in Torah are according to Hebraic thought recorded

[5] We know that the Holy One is indeed *One God***,** not many; and we also now that He does not change; but we recognize that He is far, far greater than any one man's capacity to know and experience Him. Hence if we truly want to advance our knowledge of Him we need to gaze at His transcendent beauty through as many lenses as we can.

precisely because *the Holy One has established those experiences as the underlying blueprint of our lives as well*[6]. The traditional way of expressing this is ***ma'aseh avot siman lebanim*** – literally meaning that *the experiences of the Patriarchs serve as signposts – directional and location indicators - for their descendants.* The Torah is not a storybook. The Torah is a '*how to'* book, given to us by the Holy One to help us navigate through life on earth in a way that will bring glory and honor to Him and to cause us to be the 'light to the nations' He *created*, has *called*, and is *prophetically empowering* us to be. What we tend to think of as 'history' therefore consists merely of the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov and his sons *reliving the experiences of those patriarchs on a larger canvas*. It is therefore important for us to be familiar with the details of the patriarchs' lives for two reasons: (a) to learn how we ourselves are expected to behave, and (b) to anticipate and prepare ourselves for the events that history will throw at us.

Ya'akov's Great Exile Adventure Begins to Take Its Toll

Ya'akov kicked off his new adventure in life with a *wonderful dream* in the course of which we were privileged through Torah to watch in awe with him as *angels of the Holy One ascended and descended* in full view upon something that looked like a stairway reaching from Heaven to earth. How about you - have you had any stirring dreams lately?

In the midst of Ya'akov's dream sequence Ya'akov finally heard the beautiful Voice of the God about Whom his parents had been telling him all his life *for himself* for the first time. We quivered inside with our ancestor as the living, powerful, creative, prophetic Words of the Creator of Heaven and earth looked right past all his checkered history, his self-centeredness and his guile, and declared over him as if he were as righteous as his ancestor Noach:

... I am going to give the land on which you lie to you and to your seed.
your seed will become as the dust of the earth;
you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south;
and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.
[Genesis 28:13-14]

We sighed in disbelief as we heard Ya'akov respond to this beautiful prophetic outpouring of covenant-centered grace and stunning revelation by trying to negotiate a sweet 'deal' for himself. *If the God Who appeared to me in this dream will be with me and will watch over and protect me and will provide bread and clothing to me on all my journeys, and will bring me back to my father's household in shalom, Ya'akov vowed, then in that case I will consider Him my God, and will give him a tenth of all things with which He blesses me on my journey*.

[6] See Ramban's commentary to Genesis 12:6, *Or HaTorah*, beginning of parsha *Lech Lecha*.

We walked with Ya'akov the entire dusty road from *Beit-El* in Eretz Yisrael to the village of Charan in Mesopotamia. We chuckled under our breath at what looked a whole lot like arrogance as our ancestor interacted with awkwardly the shepherds of Charan. We blushed red with real embarrassment as we watched our precocious ancestor cast all sense of social propriety to the wind and plant a kiss upon, then weep like a baby before, the beautiful shepherd-girl Rachel. We winced in empathy as we watched young Ya'akov get blinded by love and fall headlong into Laban the master-deceiver's wily web of half-truths, head-fakes, white lies, and prevarications. We gasped as we saw how Ya'akov found himself unintentionally married to two women – jealous sisters to boot - at the same time. We realized that despite his prominent place in Biblical lore at essence our ancestor Ya'akov was neither saint nor demon, fool nor sage, superhero nor rogue. He was just a man. Like other men he had to deal with appetites, drives, urges, emotions, fears, and curiosities. Like other men, he had faults and failings to go with his multiple talents. Despite all that, the Holy One loved him passionately and relentlessly *despite his humanity* - and proudly claimed him as His chosen vessel *despite all his faults and failures*. And we are – or at least should be - comforted in the realization that if the Holy One did this for our ancestor Ya'akov He will certainly do *no less for us*.

When A Patriarch Has A Mid-Life Crisis

With this realization we find that the parallels between the experiences of our ancestors that are chronicled in Torah on the one hand and the experiences of our lives [individually and as a distinct people] on the other hand all suddenly start to make sense. Well ... *up until yesterday's aliyah* that is. As we begin today's study we find ourselves right smack dab in the middle of the darkest hours of our ancestor *Ya'akov's dream.* Our dear Ya'akov is indeed in a season of *mid-life crisis* – with *no small amount of scandal to go with it.* We did not see this one coming. Somehow however we discover that Ya'akov deeply *loves* – and is deeply *loved by* – <u>two</u> women at the same time. What is worse, most of us who are familiar with Torah know that by the end of today's aliyah those TWO WIVES will actually become FOUR, as Rachel's handmaid [Bilhah] and Leah's handmaid [Zilpah] will be foisted upon Ya'akov as long-term mistresses. This is an '*alternative lifestyle'* if I ever heard of one.

What pray tell does all this craziness have to do with THE COVENANT – and the Holy One's *Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its Intended State of Beauty, Blessedness, Fruitfulness, and Harmony*? We will see, Dear Reader. It will take some time, and it will definitely involve no small amount of pain and stretching, but we will indeed see.

The Purpose of Torah's Narrative Accounts of Patriarchal Missteps, Misdeeds, and Failures

Whenever we read Torah, or Scripture in general, we must learn to clearly distinguish between *narrative accounts of what imperfect human beings do,* on the one hand, and *instructions from the Almighty,* on the other. Just because something is mentioned in Scripture – even if it is an act engaged in by one of the ***avot*** [forefathers] - does not mean that it is something the Holy One approves of, sanctions, or intends for us to emulate. This aspect of Biblical interpretation is absolutely critical. We absolutely must learn and teach our children to *sh'ma* the voice of the Holy One and His Voice alone – rather than following in the footsteps and teachings of even the best fallible men. The Holy One, you see, has told us specifically what marriage is and how we are to approach it. The Holy One's definitive word on marriage came way back in *Gan Eden* [the Garden of Eden] when the Holy One took *Chava* [Eve] and presented her to Adam as an ***ezer kenegdo*** [compatible helper, or 'helpmate']. The Holy One then and there declared:

For this reason a man is to leave his mother and father
and is to cleave unto his wife, and they are to become bachar echad [i.e., one flesh].
[Genesis 2:24]

Bachar Echad *[One Flesh]*

The Way of the Holy One – the union of the human species the Creator instituted for the purpose of populating and redeeming the world he had created – is clearly stated to be one *ish* [i.e. a man], one *ishah* [i.e. a woman], becoming *one flesh* [*bachar echad*]. Other forms of joinder are physically possible of course. And if one's conscious is seared and sensuality enslaves one's will one can even convince himself that he actually is genetically 'pre-programmed' to prefer another form of union. Of course, one can just as easily convince himself that he is genetically pre-programmed to be a sluggard, a murderer, a rapist, a child abuser, an alcoholic, or a drug addict.

Genetic predispositions, even when real, are simply irrelevant. Corralling and overcoming our unproductive and destructive propensities – not indulging, celebrating, and building our identities around them - is where freedom lies. Personal responsibility to the Holy One and His instructions is true freedom – and through walking out life in real-time with the Holy One it is possible for everyone – no matter what their genetic predisposition[s] may be.

Any physical joinder of the human species other than the Holy One ordained in Genesis 2:24 is *at best* a Charan-like compromise – a settling for something far less than God's best. *At worst* the choice to make another kind of physical joinder is a deliberate, self-deifying rebellion against the Holy One and a rejection of His

plan for populating and redeeming the world.

Multiple spouses/lovers? Not part of the plan. But once Ya'akov left his father's household he was no longer in the world of *yare* of the Holy One. He was no longer under its umbrella of protection, or its runway of fruitfulness. He now had to live in *Laban's world*. He now had to navigate minefields. He now had to try to stay focused on the Kingdom Enterprise and Objective in the midst of the world's most perverse lifestyles, self-obsessed mindsets, and materialistic worldviews.

As it was for Ya'akov, so it is for us. So how are you doing with it all, Beloved? Are you, like our ancestor Ya'akov, living in a? How are you doing at navigating the dark energy potholes of a culture in which *spiritual blindness*, *moral confusion, compromise*, and *settling for far, far less than God's best* are the norm?

But ... What's So Bad About 'Alternative Lifestyles'?

While living in exile in the dark energy cesspool of Paddan-Aram, Ya'akov adopted - only partially against his will – a lifestyle different than the Holy One had planned for and empowered mankind to follow. Having sexual relations with, and fathering children by, four different women [Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah] was definitely something other than *cleaving unto his ishah* [wife] and *becoming bachar echad* [one flesh] with her. After all, having more than one spouse [or, indeed more than one *romantic interest* at any time in life] makes it very, very difficult to ever become 'one flesh' with another person. That is what is so dangerous about encouraging, or even tolerating, things like adolescent crushes, dating relationships, and romantic experimentation. That is what is so potentially destructive about even things our society [i.e., our own version of Charan, the place of compromise and settling for less than God's best] considers 'normal' adolescent and premarital behavior – things like 'holding hands', couple-dancing, kissing, 'dating', 'going steady', and 'making out'. True love – toward the Holy One <u>and</u> toward one's intended spouse – really does *wait.* No matter what Hollywood or Madison Avenue or You Tube or Facebook may suggest to the contrary, true love really does wait. And true love is very, very careful, as it waits, what it *lets its eyes see*. True love is also very, very careful, as it waits, what it *lets its ears hear*. True love, you see, sets aside the entire realm of *physical contact* – from handholding to couple-dancing to hugging to kissing and beyond – <u>and</u> the entire realm of *romantic talk and emotions* – as *private gardens* which open only for one's intended spouse, and which are walled off from and carefully guarded against intrusion by all others. True love reserves *everything* for the intended spouse.

When True Love Gets Cheated

That said, what is one supposed to do once the '*cat is out of the bag'* so to speak – i.e. when some aspect of that which true love would have had one reserve for one's

intended spouse has been given to, or taken by, another? After all, most of us live in Laban's world – places of compromise and settling for less than God's best. Most of us have never even heard – much less really understood – that 'true love waits', or *why* waiting is a really, really, really good idea. Well here is the *bad news, Dear Reader* – what has been lost can never be retrieved. It is gone forever. And what is worse, when it leaves it leaves in its wake *a potentially very dangerous 'soul tie' with the other person or persons with which you allowed yourself become involved*. What is a "soul-tie"? Picture it as *an invisible, living fragment of the soul of the person you shared intimate contact with.* Once inter-mingling contact occurs this soul-tie is by reason of that contact becomes intertwined with <u>your</u> soul and with <u>your</u> destiny. What does that mean? It means that the soul-fragment of the person with whom you were intimate becomes extremely jealous on behalf of its former owner for your affection and attention. Unbeknownst to you, this soul tie is going to be constantly attempting to sabotage all your attempts to find true happiness with any person other than its original owner.

How does this soul-tie accomplish this sabotage? Like a virus, it attacks your 'hard drive', infecting your will, your mind and your emotions. It sets up intricate mine fields replete with subconscious triggers of sight, sound, touch and smell which are designed to activate and explode in moments of potential intimacy. Because of the soul-tie residue from the prior intimate relation, you carry into every other potential interaction or relationship – including that with your Divinely-intended/spouse - a significant quantity of baggage and emotional 'fracturing'. The fragmentation of your body, soul, and spirit produced by compromises before marriage should not be ignored in hopes it will never manifest - *because it most certainly will*. It should not be disregarded under the false idea that it will 'just go away' in time – *because it most definitely won't*.

Through this fracturing the misguided soul-tie means that while you can have many relationships of varying depths, you will inevitably find yourself incapable of giving to your spouse the depth of oneness for which you were created and empowered by God to give. To one extent or another, this means that your future spouse will always have to relate not only to you, but will simultaneously have to learn to deal with the soul-tie residue of all your former crushes, boyfriends/girlfriends, lovers, and former spouses, if any, with whom you allowed your body, your soul [i.e. your <u>will</u>, your <u>mind</u> and your <u>center of</u> <u>emotions</u>] and/or your spirit to become intertwined. Just as things seem to be going well, you will find that an irrational fear of rejection [or perhaps *commitment*] appears out of nowhere and a subconscious voice whispers '*Run for your life*!' or '*He'll never really appreciate/understand you*!" Or a rush of unexplained anger or pathological

jealousy will come out of nowhere to spew poison all over a theretofore deep and meaningful relationship. Or a controlling, manipulative plan or vain imagination will pop into your mind and start to make you – or your new spouse – miserable. Or a sudden groundless revulsion at the sight or sound or scent of a potential friend or mate – or of yourself – will make you want to run away and hide from relationship ... *or worse.* And you will wonder what on earth went wrong, and why you seem to be so cursed and unsuccessful in the realm of relationship. And the answer will be that the soul-fragment of a past intimate relation is still at work doing a bang-up job of confusing and fragmentizing <u>your</u> soul in such a way as to render you incapable of being fully '*bachar echad'* with anyone else. That is why waiting – for all kinds of intimacy – is a very, very, very good idea.

But What if ...

But ... well, *what if ....* What if you have <u>already</u> given yourself in a significant degree of intimacy to another, and therefore you are no longer an *echad* [complete unity] but are a *fragmented person, body, soul, and spirit.* If that is your condition, *well ... welcome to Charan* my brother or sister! Welcome to your own personal version of Ya'akov's mid-life crisis! But do not despair – instead, take heart! For recognizing the nature of the fragmentation and its cause is the first step in receiving Divine Healing for it. Now that you know what the source of your problem is you can still have a successful marriage that brings honor and glory to the Holy One. You can still produce, raise, and teach the Holy One's ways to Godly children. You simply *need to come to grips with the reality of and invite the Holy One to deal with your – and, if applicable, your spouse's – soul-ties with others*.

It is time to renounce and make heartfelt *t'shuvah* concerning each soul-tie creating relationship of the past one-by-one, and to ask forgiveness both from the Holy One and from your intended or your spouse. It is time to break free from the dark energy of the inappropriate sharing of intimacy. It is time to jettison the soul-tie baggage from each of your previous intimate relationships. In agreement with your intended or your spouse, submit each and every one of those soul-ties – and every ounce of pleasure and/or pain we experienced in connection with the activities and relationships which led to the creation of those soul-ties - to the Holy One in prayer and humility. Ask Him to *purge the soul-ties with each of the individuals in question from your soul and spirit*. Ask Him to *release you from all ties and bonds to those persons* forever. Ask Him to *limit the impact of those soul-ties upon your relationships with your intended or our spouse*, by regenerating, recreating, and restoring us, body, soul, and spirit, to newness of life[7]. *The sooner the better*. For

[7] We might also need to consider a *mikveh*, but that is way too far outside the scope of this lesson to discuss in any detail here For those interested in following up on this, please consult the Rabbi's son's

the good of all concerned.

Keep in mind that in the spiritual world *vidui* [*acknowledgment and confession of a mistake, and owning up to the consequences*] is always the first step toward growth. In the context of covenant relationship with the Holy One, you see, even the most negative things that can be imagined can issue forth things more wonderful than we can even imagine. Notice, for instance, the names that Leah – the one who received a fragmented husband if there ever was one – gave to the sons she and her maidservant Zilpah bore to Ya'akov. First came *Reuven* – meaning 'behold, a son'[8]. Then came *Sh'mon*, meaning 'one who hears'[9]. Third came *Levi*, meaning 'united'[10]. Fourth came *Y'hudah*, meaning 'I will praise the Holy One'[11]. Fifth, from Zilpah's loins, came the son Leah named *Gad*, meaning 'fortunate'[12]. Sixth, also from Zilpah's loins, came the son Leah named *Asher*, meaning 'happy'[13]. Seventh, from Leah's own womb, came the son she named *Yissakhar*, meaning 'there is a reward'[14]. Eighth, Leah bore Ya'akov a son the last son she would give him, whom she named *Zevulun*,[15] meaning 'honor'. And finally, Leah bore Ya'akov a daughter, whom she named *Dinah,* meaning 'judge'.

One thing you will not find in Leah's life is *depression.* Another thing you will not find is any *bitterness.* A third thing you will not find is *failure*. A fourth thing you will not find is *infidelity*. Leah did not allow the fact that the mate she received was fragmented and could not become *bachar echad* with her to the extent the Holy One intended to take away her faith in the Holy One or her joy in life. She *dealt with it* and went on, and *the Holy One blessed her wonderfully.* He can do the same

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comments beginning at page 4 of Friday's Study for parsha *Metzora* [Commenting on Leviticus 15:25-31], under the headings *"The Process for Transitioning Back to a Tahor State", "Back to the Future",* and *"The Task of the Redeemed – Distinguishing Between Things Tamei and Things Tahor*".

[8] The Hebrew name we translate as *Reuven*, or *Reuben*, is *resh, alef, vav, beit, nun sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #7205, pronounced *reh-oo'-vane*. It is a phrase made up of the two Hebrew words *ra'ah* [*behold*, or *see the manifestation of*], and *ben* [*son*].

[9] *Sh'mon*, or Simeon, is *shin, mem, ayin, vav, nun sofit,* Strong's Hebrew word #8089. A noun form of the verb s*h'ma*. Gesenius considers Sh'mon a contraction of the word *sh'ma* [he hears and appropriately responds] and the word *aman* [he receives, accepts, and responds with appropriate changes to accommodate], and renders its translation "*hearing with acceptance*". Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament,* page 837.

[10] *Levi* is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *lavah, to* join together, or unite.

[11] *Y'hudah* is a future tense form of Strong's Hebrew word #1906, *hey, dalet*, meaning *shout for joy*, or '*give thanks'*, sometimes wrongly translated as '*praise*'. *Hod* is derived from the unused Hebrew verb root *hadad*, meaning to '*break*', or to '*break out'* [as in song, or dance, or music].

[12] *Gad* is *gimel, dalet*. It is generally translated as 'good fortune', but also sometimes is interpreted to refer to 'a troop'.

[13] *Asher* is *alef, shin, resh*, meaning '*happy*'.

[14] *Yissakhar* is *yod, sin, sin, kaf, resh. It consists of two words – yesh and sakhar;* the resulting phrase means *'there is a reward', or 'there is a compensation'.*

[15] *Zevulun* is *zayin, veit, vav, lamed, vav, nun sofit*.

for us.

Introducing the Original 'Children of Israel'

Today's aliyah discusses the events surrounding the births of the first 11 of Ya'akov's 12 children. They came in groups: from Leah were born *Reuven, Sh'mon, Levi,* and *Y'hudah;* then from Rachel's maid Bilhah came forth first *Dan*, then *Naftali;* then from Leah's maid Zilpah came forth *Gad* and *Asher;* then from Leah came forth a second group of offspring whom she named *Yissakhar, Zevulun,* and *Dinah*; then from Rachel (at last) came forth *Yosef.* All of these children were born in *Charan* while Ya'akov was serving Laban. Since Ya'akov will ultimately be renamed 'Israel', the sons and daughters we meet in today's aliyah can be said to be the original 'children of Israel.[16]'

Ya'akov's years in *Laban's world*, though fruitful and productive in many ways, were not pleasant ones for our ancestors. Because of the trickery Laban had used on Ya'akov and Ya'akov's unwillingness to either have his marriage to Leah annulled or give up on his dream of marrying Rachel, two very competitive sisters now found themselves - horror of horrors - married to the same man at the same time. And the man to which both Leah and Rachel found themselves simultaneously married was not in much of a position to ease their pain because he himself was just beginning to learn the Holy One's ways after spending his youth engaged in fierce competition and intrigue with his own brother, Esav.

It was, you see, the same destructive competitiveness which Ya'akov had always felt toward his brother Esav that was, during the 14 or 15 years following his marriage(s), played out right before Ya'akov's eyes in his tent between Rachel and Leah. Their competition was, it turned out, every bit as fierce and as emotional as had been Ya'akov's and Esav's. Ya'akov's tent in Charan turned out to be a lot like Rivkah's womb in particular, and Ya'akov's childhood in general. Kingdoms-to-be jostling with each other for control and advantage. Worlds and worldviews colliding violently, moment-by-moment, day-by-day. Leah – the strong, faithful, elder sister - was competing for Ya'akov's affection and acceptance - and the only weapon she had in the competition was *a fertile womb*. Rachel – the impetuous, tumultuous younger sister - had Ya'akov's affection and acceptance, but wanted Ya'akov all to herself - something her conniving brother had, by his trickery, made impossible! And to complicate her fear of losing Ya'akov to her older sister, she found herself *barren*, unable to give Ya'akov children. This was no idyllic environment. In today's vernacular it would be called a "dysfunctional home".

[16] Technically, of course, the only child born to 'Israel' was *Benyamin* [Benjamin]. All others were sired by him when he was known exclusively as Ya'akov.

Warning: If not dealt with through *teshuvah* protocols, toxic 'competition enmity fixation' generally passes *l'dor v'dor – i.e.* from generation to generation. What is worse, with each generation affected 'competition enmity fixation' tends to gather more and more dark energy and turn more and more violent. Our ancestors' history is a case in point: the story of Yosef and his brothers is just the story of Ya'akov and Esav, Rachel and Leah, one generation removed.

Rachel's Dark Energy Stronghold of Jealousy, Self-Will and Ranting

While Leah is giving Ya'akov the first 'batch' of four sons - Rueven, Sh'mon, Levi, and Y'hudah - Rachel was *smitten with barrenness*. It was hard; and she did not handle it well. In her disappointment she chose to succumb to dark energy. She blamed Ya'akov; she blamed Laban; but most of all she blamed … *Leah.* Torah tells us ***v'tekanei Rachel ba'achotah*** *[Rachel was jealous of her sister].* **Genesis 30:1(a).** Jealousy embraced is like a beacon calling out for other forms of dark energy to join it. This was quickly joined by self-absorption – *i.e.* wanting everything HER WAY, in HER TIMING, for the sake of HER FEELINGS – no matter what the cost to other people or relationships. This led to anger.

This is all just part of the toxic residue of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The poison our forefathers ingested, and which became part of our physical DNA, always results in us blaming others for whatever we perceive as evil – be it in the world or in our private lives. **See e.g. Genesis 3:12-13.** So it was with Rachel. So Rachel went on a rant. Having consumed a toxic cocktail of dark energy Rachel chased it with accusation and manipulation. She turned on Ya'akov, demanding: ***havah-li vanim v'im-ayin metah anochi***. These words are generously translated by our authors as "*Give me children or I will die*[17]." This was a woman enraged, lashing out. Ya'akov, who loved her dearly, corrected her in love.

Vayomer ha-tachat Elohim anochi
He said. "Am I in the place of the Holy One?

asher-mana mimech p'ri-vaten
It is He who is holding back the fruit of your womb."

[17] In Matthew Henry's commentary on this passage, he points out "[Rachel] did not apply to God by prayer, but to Jacob only, forgetting that *children are a heritage of the Holy One,* **Ps. 127:3**. We wrong both God and ourselves when our eye is more to men, the instruments of our crosses and comforts, than to ... the author. Observe a difference between Rachel's asking for this mercy and Hannah's, **1 Sa. 1:10,** etc. Rachel envied; Hannah wept. Rachel must have children, and she died of the second; Hannah prayed for one child, and she had four more. Rachel is importunate and peremptory; Hannah is submissive and devout. *If thou wilt give me a child, I will give him to the Holy One.* Let Hannah be imitated, and not Rachel ...."

The Vast Difference Between Human Anger and Divine Wrath

Anger is *a product of base, fallen human flesh*, not a fruit, gift, or evidence of the Spirit. The same is true of all anger's 'sister' emotions – i.e. irritation, aggravation, frustration, provocation, resentment, offense, outrage, fury, etc. If anger or any of its sister emotions arises in us, it only has one purpose: *to warn the one experiencing it that something is wrong in both [a] his or her heart and [b] his or her relationship with the Holy One, and needs to be immediately addressed*. Quoting the Psalmist, Shaul taught that we should never let the sun go down on our anger. See **Ephesians 4:26;** compare **Psalm 4:4-7**. Shaul also taught that a man should not be "quick" to become angry. **Titus 1:7**. Because we live in a world where the flesh is so prevalent – indeed celebrated - occasional flare-ups of fleshly anger are pretty much inevitable. If one has a consistently short fuse or becomes enraged or outraged at traffic, at noise, at minor inconvenience, or with minimal provocation, however, it is a sure sign that there is something very, very wrong with that person's relationship with the Holy One. A short fuse or a hot temper is proof positive that a person is allowing dark energy to control his or her thoughts, speech, and behavior, and that Divine Light is not operating in the person in any meaningful way.

Why then does the Torah indicate that the Holy One experiences 'wrath'? Because Divine Wrath and human anger are nothing alike. Wrath is *a Divine Attribute*. There is a huge difference between human anger and Divine wrath. Human anger, if left unchecked, will always turn retributive, self-vindicating, and self-destructive. Divine Wrath, on the other hand, is always redemptive and its focus is always on relationship-restoration.

Immature people, immersed in dark energy, almost always struggle with anger. Mature people have learned the hard way that retribution and self-vindication are always destructive, never helpful. One of the critical tests of maturity is therefore *how we deal with the human anger we experience.* People who are 'growing up into Messiah' learn certain things. First of all, such people learn not to allow themselves to be so self-absorbed and irritable that we become *"quick" to anger*. Secondly they learn not to *cave into human anger by resorting to either physical violence* or *hurtful speech*. Thirdly, they learn not to *stir the toxicity of human anger up and spread it around their spheres of influence by complaining, backbiting and spreading lashon hara to anyone who will listen*.

Responding to a flare up of human anger by resorting to backbiting, complaining, and spreading *lashon hara* to anyone who will listen is the Biblical epitome of ***hate***. It is the antithesis of love. It is an unmistakable sign of lovelessness. So what is *the Biblical way* of dealing with flare-ups of anger? The Biblical way to deal

with anger is to take it to the Holy One immediately in prayer, and exchange the anger one is feeling for the Holy One's emotions and attitudes of forgiveness, compassion, insight, and wisdom. Then, after intercession, not out of anger but out of compassion, it is time to engage the person with whom you were previously angry in a *one-on-one conversation with the person who angered you – without a trace of yelling, name-calling, accusing, or hurtful speech – much less intimidation, manipulation through guilt trips or self-serving appeals to emotion,* or *physical violence*. Dealing with anger in this way is Biblical proof of true *love*. See **Leviticus 19:16-18**. Barring risk physical of injury, if one does NOT go back and speak in such a manner to someone with whom he or she has allowed himself/herself to become angry one simply does not love the other person in any Biblical way. Torah says:

Do not hate your brother in your heart.
***Rebuke your neighbor frankly** so that you will not share in his guilt.*
***Do not seek revenge** or **bear a grudge** against one of your people,*
*But **love your neighbor** as yourself."*
[Leviticus 19:17-18]

When the confrontation occurs, the words spoken should be without anger – which has been exchanged for Divine forgiveness, compassion, insight, and wisdom. The object of the confrontation should be future-focused, and solution-minded – not blame or punishment centered. Calm verbal re-engagement in such a context, with such a motivation, is REAL LOVE. As it is written: *Open rebuke [is] better than secret love.* **Proverbs 27:5.**

As it is also written: *Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.* **Psalm 141:5.**

This does not of course excuse childish, selfish outbursts, or needless infliction of emotional pain on others in the guise of 'venting' or 'ranting' – for which there is simply no place. But it *should* cause all of us to rethink our aversion to the emotion and expression of anger by those we love, and to words spoken that we simply – and selfishly - do not want to hear.

We simply cannot allow ourselves the selfish and foolish indulgence of automatically 'tuning out', or discounting, words spoken by other people due to anger - theirs or ours. What we who are in covenant with the Holy One in Messiah *can* do is to prayerfully place the Holy One between us and someone who is, or who makes us, angry, asking the Holy One to filter and interpret for what is being said, to release us to receive and respond appropriately to that portion which the Holy One wants us to receive, and to forgive the speaker for that which is excessive, vindictive, or inappropriate.

Romans 8:28 Proven True in the Lives of the Patriarchs

But take heart! It was the plan of the Holy One for both the first prophet and deliverer of Israel [Moshe], the priestly line of Aharon, and our Messiah Yeshua ben David to come from Ya'akov's union with Leah and on the other hand for Messiah Ben Yosef to come from Ya'akov's union with Rachel. Out of this war-torn camp, and indeed out of this very competition, the Holy One would also bring the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel and fulfill ***step one*** of His plan for the redemption of the world. And in the midst of this rather unpleasant situation Ya'akov learned a lesson he would never forget about jealousy, sibling rivalry, and anger. The Holy One works all things - even the most insidious sibling rivalry, jealousy, competitiveness, and anger - together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. **Romans 8:28**.

The 'Coming Out' of Messiah

In today's suggested reading from the apostolic scriptures we continue with the theme of this week's parsha - *departing*. As this reading begins Yeshua has been to the *Yardin* (Jordan River). Yochanan the Immerser [a/k/a 'John the Baptist'] has proclaimed Him to be the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".* In today's aliyah Yeshua "departs" from that cozy womb and begin teaching Torah publicly. Before Yeshua returns to the region of Galilee to begin the public phase of His rabbinic ministry however, He seeks out a man whose name we have come to know as "Philip[18]".

On the next day he was determined to go out into the Galil,
and he found Pilipos. Yeshua said to him, ***Follow me****.*

It is very important we understand what Yeshua said to *Pilipos* [Philip] - for it is the same thing He says to us. Our English translations say that upon "finding" Pilipos Messiah Yeshua said to him, ***Follow Me***. In today's society we most frequently hear those words spoken by the host or hostess at our favorite eating establishment. In that context those words imply only that we must go somewhere the other intends to take us - a short-term action without serious life implications. But spoken by a Hebrew to a Hebrew the words mean something very different. When Yeshua speaks the words our English texts translate as ***follow Me*** to Pilipos of Beth-Tzeida, He is not merely saying He will take him someplace - a nice table with a view perhaps from which Pilipos can do what he likes. The meaning of the actual words is

"*leave your way of life totally, and join yourself to me –*
unite with me - as a tamid joins himself to a rabbi.
Let Me and My teaching of the Torah become the focal point of your life –
and continue to do this wherever it takes you, and whatever it costs you."

[18] The actual name of this man in the Greek texts of Yochanan's account is *"Pilipos*". Pilipos means *lover of horses*

Yeshua's words in Hebrew called Philip to become *al-p'nei* [face-to-Face] with Yeshua in a way that clearly signified Yeshua was the Messiah. After all, one of the Ten Words the Holy One spoke over the mixed multitude at Sinai specifically forbade the Holy One's people from becoming "*al-p'nei*" with anyone besides God. **Exodus 20:3.** Phillip understood. And he "departed". Remember, this week's parsha is "*Vayetze"* – and he departed. May you become *al-p'nei* with the Messiah described for us in the Torah – and no other - and *depart* as well, Dear Reader!

Questions For Today's Study

1. On a piece of paper make three vertical columns.

[A] In the first column list in the order of their birth the eleven sons and one daughter born to Ya'akov in today's passage.

[B] In the second column, beside the name of each of child of Ya'akov, write the meaning of that child's name.

[C] In the third column, beside the meaning of each child's name, write the name of the child's mother.

2. As chapter 30 begins Rachel is filled with jealousy, and takes it out on Ya'akov. And Ya'akov lashed right back. *Am I in the place of the Holy One, who has kept you from having children*?

[A] Why do you think Rachel, who had Ya'akov's undying affection, was still *jealous* of, and angry toward, Leah?

[B] How do you think sisters (or brothers) *should* feel toward each other?

[C] Why do you think it is so hard for brothers (or sisters) to support, get along with, and cooperate with each other, rather than compete with each other?

[D] What important lesson did Rachel and Leah learn "during wheat harvest"?

[E] Why do you think the Holy One arranged it so Rachel and Leah would both marry Ya'akov?

[F] What role did Laban play in the Holy One's plan?

3. In today's haftarah the Holy One speaks of the "sin" and waywardness of Efrayim, as follows:

The guilt of Efrayim is stored up. His sin is stored up.
The sorrows of a travailing woman will come on him.
He is an unwise son; for when it is time, he doesn't come to the opening of the womb.

The Holy One indicates Efrayim is like a child whose time has come to be born, but who will not come out - is unwilling to leave the womb. Similarly, in each of our lives, there comes a time to step forward, to step up to another level, to assume responsibilities, and become who we were created, and have been nourished, prepared, empowered, and exhorted to be. The question is whether we will come to

the light and walk into it - *or* will burrow as deeply as we can in the 'womb' where our preparation has been occurring. Part of our relationship with the Holy One should be to hear His voice telling us it is "time" to step out, time to move. When it is time let it be said of you ... "*Vayetze* - "*and he departed*".

[A] What two things does the Holy One say are being done with Efrayim's "sin"?

[B] In Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Lexicon look up the two Hebrew words used in verse 12 to describe Efrayim's misdeeds. Write the Hebrew words and their meanings.

[C] What does the Holy One say in verse 13 that the "child" [Hebrew, ***ben***] Efrayim lacks?

[D] What does the Holy One indicate was the sign that should have indicated to Efrayim that it was time to "be born", or step up to another level?

[E] To whom is the prophet referring when the uses the name Efrayim?

[F] What responsibility had "Efrayim" not stepped up to assume when the time came?

4. In today's B'rit Chadasha reading we read about Yeshua of Natzret's initial encounter with Philip [Greek "*Pilipos*"].

[A] The name *Pilipos* is Greek, not Hebrew. It means "*lover of horses*" [a very Greek and un-Hebrew sentiment]. The fact that this gentleman had a Greek name does not mean he was a goy [*gentile*] – but it likely *does* mean that his family had "Hellenized" and were not particularly observant of Torah. Read Deuteronomy 17:16, Psalm 33:17-19, and Psalm 147:10-11, then explain the Hebraic message which was being sent by Yeshua calling a man named Pilipos as one of his first talmidim.

[B] Who did Pilipos go and "find" after Messiah Yeshua called him to "follow" [become ***al-p'nei*** with] Him?

[C] What do you think Pilipos meant when he described Messiah as the "son of Joseph" [ben Yosef] (before you answer, read Genesis 47:16-17, which would have specific prophetic meaning for a man named Pilipos)?

[D] Using an encyclopedia, a Bible Dictionary, and a Bible Atlas (or other source material available to you) do some research on the town of *Natzeret* [Nazareth]. What does the name '*Natzeret*' (pronounced 'nawt-*zair*'-et') mean?

[E] The name *Natan'el*, unlike Pilipos, is a Hebrew name. The name is derived from the Hebrew verb root *natan* (Strong's Hebrew word #5414, meaning to *give*, to *set in place,* or *establish*, or to *devote*). It was the name of the prophet who advised King David **[II Samuel chapters 7 and 12].** What do you think is the Hebraic meaning of the name Natan'el (the Hebrew pronunciation is 'naw'-ta-nel')?

[F] Why do you think Natan'el [Nathaniel] would have questioned why "anything good" could come from Natzeret?

[G] When *Yeshua Rabbeinu* [Our Rabbi Yeshua] saw Natan'el coming toward him, Yeshua stated exactly what He saw. Since Natan'el was not sinless, what did Yeshua mean?

[H] Place yourself in this passage. Close your eyes, and imagine that it is you, instead of Natan'el, approaching Yeshua, and that Yeshua is looking into your soul as He did into Natan'el's. Pause for a moment and meditate. What words does Yeshua speak over you?

May you know the time and the season for departure,
May you touch no unclean thing on your way out,
and may you always follow the Holy One all the way to where He stays.

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 85:8-9

I will sh'ma what the Lord, the Holy One, will speak,
For he will speak ***shalom*** *to his people, his holy ones;*
But let them not turn again to folly.

*Surely His 'salvation' [*a noun derived from the verb root *yasha,*
as is the Messiah's Divinely ordained name *'Yeshua']*
is near those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.