

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Re'eh:** Deuteronomy 11:26-12:27
 Haftarah: Isaiah 54:11-12
 B'rit Chadasha: I John 4:1

When the Holy One brings you into the land

[Deuteronomy 11:29a]

Today's Meditation is Psalms 112:1-3;

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

Re'eh – Behold ... *anochi noten lifneichem hayom* – I am placing before your faces this day ... *berachah uklalah* – a blessing and a curse ... *Et-ha-berachah asher tishme'u el-mitzvot Adonai Eloheichem* - the blessing is for you if you sh'ma the mitzvot of the Holy One your God Deuteronomy 11:26 -27a.

Re'eh is always studied at or about the beginning of the sixth month of the Biblical calendar. This *mid-point cycle* of moon phases, often referred to simply as *Elul*, is a time of intense excitement each year. This is the month of which it is said: '*the King is in the Field*'. It is this time each year that the Holy One steps out of the cloak of invisibility, incorporeality, and infinity, and visits His Covenant People to prepare them for the prophetic 'High Holy Days'.² *Re'eh* is therefore the parsha with which we always begin a prophetic 'countdown' designed to get our hearts, souls, minds, bodies and priorities ready to embrace the High Calling of our God – and testify to the nations of His Goodness in the rapidly approaching season of Divine Appointments. From the moment we read Moshe's opening directive to *Re'eh!* [Behold!] something should begin to stir deep within us. Our hearts should leap within our chests. Our angst, offenses, and stresses should retreat to where they belong. We should *lift our eyes* far above the ordinary, mundane affairs of life, entertainment, business, politics, relationship and religion – and begin to prepare our hearts for the most joyful of all pilgrimages to *Y'rushalayim*, the City of our King.

Can you hear the sound of Heaven's shofar? Are you beginning to feel 'restless' in your spirit? Are you suddenly feeling like a stranger in the city where you live, work, and carry on the ordinary affairs of life? Are you finding yourself longing for your *real home* – where your King sits enthroned, His beauty enthralls, His

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² Per Biblical directive we are to commemorate *Yom T'ruah* on the new moon of Tishri, *Yom Kippur* on the 10th day of Tishri, *Chag Sukkot* on the 15th through the 21st of Tishri, and *Sh'mini Atzeret* on the twenty-second day of the same month.

love heals and restores, and His Words supercharge the atmosphere with electricity? Can you hear the Holy One calling to ‘lift up your eyes’ toward *Y’rushalayim*? Good! It is all part of the Holy One’s Divine timing.

***Yea, Though I Walk Through The Valley ...
Surely Goodness and Mercy Will Follow Me!***

Moshe cannot physically lead the generation raised up in the Wilderness under his tutelage into the Promised Land of this world. But what he can do before passing into the good night that awaits him is to *open up the spiritual eyes of multitudes in a thousand generations so we can catch a vision for, and emblazon on our hearts a passionate desire to bask in and possess, the far greater Promised Land that awaits us in Climactic Days to Come.*

The destination Moshe has in mind for every one of us is none other than the great *valley of decision*. Moshe knows, you see, that we will all have to pass through the valley of decision some day. And he would rather we be led to and through it by someone within whose chest beats the passionate heart of the Bridegroom than by some fallen angel – or for that matter even by an anointed shepherd suffering from mixed motives, a heavy burden of emotional scars, and a confusing mish-mash patchwork of borrowed doctrines and theologies. Moshe knows that in the valley of decision there is *a critical crossroads*. At this critical crossroads two paths – paths leading in very different directions – will begin to diverge right before the traveler’s eyes. The name of the first of the two diverging paths is *B’rachah* – a Hebrew name that we generally translate into English as ‘blessing’. The name of the other diverging pathway is *Qelalah* – a Hebrew name that we generally translate into English as ‘a curse’.

Re'eh anochi noten lifneichem ha-yom berachah uqelalah

Behold! I am setting before your faces this day a blessing and a ‘curse’.

Et-ha-berachah asher tishme'u el-mitzvot Adonai Eloheichem

The blessing will come as you sh'ma the life instructions of the Holy One your God

asher anochi metzaveh etchem ha-yom

with which I am enjoining you all today.

V'ha-qelalah im-lo tishmei'u el-mitzvot Adonai Eloheichem

But the curse if you do not sh'ma the life instructions of the Holy One your God,

V'sartem min-ha-derech

but turn aside from the way

asher anochi metzaveh etchem hayom

that I carve/hew out for you today,

lalechet acharei elohim acherim asher lo-yedatem

to go after other gods/priorities/authorities/influences which you have not known.
[Deuteronomy 11:26-28]

Long before we actually get to the crossroads of these two paths Moshe wants us to fully understand not only exactly what kind of lifestyle the pathway called *B'rachah* consists of but also the full implications of what the pathway called *Qalalah* – i.e. the ultimate ‘alternative lifestyle’ to which the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes will give the poetic label ‘vanity of vanities’ – entails.

How we respond – and which these paths we choose each time they cross, will determine how much *Kingdom Currency* – i.e. the Beauty Realm glory and Kingdom weight that accompanies a life characterized from of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, emunah, and self-discipline – we will carry with us on our journey and bring to bear in our destination.

Introducing the Five Parshot of Preparation

Moshe has only five parshot of Torah to prepare us for the decision we will have to make in the *valley of decision*. Everything he will say to us in *Re'eh*, in *Shoftim*, in *Ki Tetze*, in *Ki Tavo*, and in *Nitzavim* will therefore be spoken with the decision we are going to have to make at the great crossroads in mind.

The kind of decision Moshe is going to be preparing us to make over the next five weeks involves *a choice between two dramatically different and mutually exclusive lifestyles and life-focuses*. That will make these next five parshot pretty intense, to say the least. The critical moment in the valley of decision for which Moshe is preparing us will come near the end of parsha *Nitzavim*, with the dramatic call of Deuteronomy 30:19-20 to ‘*choose life*’.

‘*Why all the drama*’ you ask? ‘*Why must we be troubled to make such a choice*’, you wonder? Why does the Holy One not simply exercise His great power and *make us do what He knows is best for us*? Ah, Dear Reader, that is the most beautiful part of the story. The Holy One wants, deserves, and will have as His Bride a people who knowingly and intentionally choose Him and His Ways over all competing alternatives. He deserves as His most intimate companion much more than a slave or a pre-programmed robot. He deserves not a fearful servant but a *passionate lover and loyal, intimate friend*.

In order that we be able to make a real choice the Holy One knows that *there must be alternative choices presented*. He wants our choice of Him and His ways over all available alternatives to be an *informed choice*. That is why Moshe has over the past two parshot been laying out in passionate language the general principle of the *sh'ma* lifestyle.

What Has Moshe Taught Us Thus Far About the Redeemed Lifestyle And Its Purposes Vis-à-vis the Grand Redemptive Plan?

Moshe has taught us that the most important first step a person can take on the journey of life in Covenant with the Holy One is to dedicate his life and his home to *listening to*, and *hearing*, and *treasuring* as one's most prized possession, the instructions for living of the One True God, to *internalizing* His Truths, and *speaking out loud*, and *living according to, what he has heard*. He has taught us that this step of faith is absolutely necessary in order to separate us from the way of the world and enable us to begin to see alternative lifestyles and life-focuses for what they truly are.

Moshe has also taught us that the *Kryat Sh'ma* - the twice-daily recitation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-17, and Numbers 15:37-41 – is not merely an affirmation of faith, but a strategic *gateway to a radical new way of life*. He has taught us that the phrase *Sh'ma Yisrael* means to adopt as a life-focus the *listening ear*, the inclination of the soul toward every Word spoken by the Holy One as a center of gravity around which all our thoughts, attitudes, opinions, conversations, and deeds revolve. He has taught us that to *sh'ma* means not just to hear out what the Holy One has to say, but to surrender all independence from the Holy One, and to leave all others, and to cleave only to Him. He has taught us that to *sh'ma* means to *accept a role as a Bride* and become a *responder* rather than an *initiator* in God-man interactions.

Moshe has taught us that to *sh'ma* means to give up trying to win our salvation, earn Divine approval, or determine what is *right* and *fair* and *just* through our own powers of reasoning and in our wisdom. He has taught us that to *sh'ma* means to trust in the Divine Bridegroom and to do *only what He says to do*, *only when* and *only where* and *only how* He says to do it. Moshe has taught us that to *sh'ma* means *getting comfortable letting the Divine Bridegroom truly be the stronger partner in the covenant relationship*. And he has taught us that to *sh'ma* means to *go only where the Divine Bridegroom says go*, to *eat only what He says to eat*, and to *stay where He says to stay* – whether we understand it – or like it - or not.

The Secret of the Blessing Is Sh'ma-ing the Mitzvot of our Bridegroom – i.e. Adopting and Maintaining a Bridal Orientation to Him, to His Moods and Movements, and to His Words

To teach us these things Moshe has introduced to us what I refer to as *the Great Bridegroom Paradigm of Torah*. He has made it clear that the kind of relationship the Holy One desires to have with us is analogous to the relationship between a Bridegroom and His Betrothed Bride. Moshe has awakened us to the reality that the Holy One loves us deeply, and deserves to be loved deeply in return. The Holy

One desires – and deserves - for the human beings in whom He has invested so much to become unto Him as a beloved, passionate, and devoted partner in Covenant. Whatever our natural gender may be all human beings are therefore prophetically empowered - by either hearing or reading the Words the Holy One spoke at Sinai - to become *bridal* in orientation in regard to our all-important relationship with the Holy One. Please let the implications of that *sink in on you* for a moment. Embrace the *Bridegroom paradigm* Moshe introduces in Torah. Enjoy it. Make it the primary paradigm through which you approach life and spirituality. Being “bridal” in orientation to everything in life, you see, is a key element – if not *the* key element - in relating to the Holy One.

Alas bridal orientation is the exact opposite of what most modern people know as religion. Most of what our society knows as religion is, instead, what I call “*Husbandry*” – taking the *masculine* role in interactions with God. Such an approach to religion says that it is what WE do that matters most. The ‘Husbandry’ mindset insists that we must teach classes. It tells us we must sing songs and play music that ‘ushers in the presence’ or makes people feel closer to the Holy One. It thinks we must win the masses³. It strategizes how we must organize fund-raisers, and keep the tithes and offerings flowing in. It masterminds how we must find and implement successful social welfare programs that reach the masses in this day and time. It says we simply must. It tells us *Heaven is counting on us*. Under the ‘Husbandry’ approach it is logical that God’s role is just to bless – and give a little power boost to - whatever we do. In other words, under this approach to spirituality God’s purpose is primarily to stand behind us, be the wind beneath our wings, and make us look really good.

This approach plays to the human ego. Under the *husbandry orientation* to spirituality, you see, it is incumbent upon us to choose the venue, time and place of, and define boundaries for, individual and collective interactions with the Divine Bridegroom. And it is expected, under this orientation, that the Holy One will respond like a little puppy to whatever we decide and vote to do - just happy to be tossed a bone every once in a while. We, under this orientation, choose the means and instrumentalities and patterns of service and of intimacy. The Holy One is expected to *bless our choices*, and make them rich and meaningful [like a Bride is expected to make a house a “home”]. We expect Him to cater to our every wish and desire, and meet our every need, while we do all the *hard work* and all the thinking – you know, *the “masculine” stuff*. The *husbandry* approach is, of course, popular

³ Consider this: *Who won Noah over to the redemptive plan of the Holy One? Who convinced Abram of the superiority of the way of Covenant lifestyle? Who convinced Shaul of Tarsus that he needed to change his direction?* The Holy One did these things, and so many more, without human intervention. If He lets us participate in the redemption of souls it is a privilege beyond measure – but He would never leave such an important task in our hands. Except the Father draw a man, no man can come to the Messiah.

and appealing - because it puts *us* in the masculine role – responsible for saving the world, “fixing” creation, interceding, etc. It is absolutely wonderful for the human ego. But consider this: by placing ourselves in the *masculine* role, we automatically assign God to the *feminine* role – He responds to *us*. Under the husbandry approach, we are all-important – He is, indeed, under this approach, totally dependent upon us. If we don’t do it, under this approach, we believe it doesn’t – because it cannot - get done. God *needs* us, you see. The Creator of the Universe is, under this way of thinking, *our dependent*.

But Is That True?

Torah presents us with a very different picture of spiritual reality than the husbandry approach of modern religion espouses. Torah very clearly pictures *the Holy One* [not us] as the stronger partner in the covenant relationship. Torah pictures *Him* [not us] doing the thinking, and all the hard work, and pictures us [not Him] being the Bride, and making the ‘house’ He gives us a ‘home’. Torah pictures our lives as an intimate dance of love in which the Holy One leads and we follow, and in which we do what we see Him doing, and move only in response to His cues. The *husbandry* approach on the other hand not only says we lead in the dance, but that we also choose the dance hall [which is designed to our tastes, not His], the orchestra [consisting of people who make us feel good, or dazzle us with talent], the song – and the beat.

The Trap Door of the Qelalah Pathway

We have discussed that secret entrance to the pathway of *B’rachah* is through the portal of *sh’ma-ing* the mitzvot of Torah with a Bridal Orientation. There is also a portal that leads to the other pathway Moshe wants us to know about – the pathway of *Qelalah*. That portal is more like a trapdoor leading to a free fall through multiple levels or strata of a deep cavern. The initial trap door is merely *lo sh’ma-ing* – i.e. failing to resonate with and respond to – the mitzvot of Torah. The mind always comes up with plenty of excuses – for example: ‘*Those mitzvot were just for ancient Israel, not for me!*’ ‘*That is just too hard; God knows I can’t do it, so why even try!*’ *If I apply any time or energy to the mitzvot of Torah, I will be ‘going back under the law’* [whatever that means!] *and denigrating/despising the death of Yeshua on the Cross* [in some way no one seems to be able to explain!]. *Lo sh’ma-ing* the mitzvot leads to phase II of the great end-over-end tumble onto the *Qelalah* pathway. What is phase II of that tumble? Moshe warns us that *lo sh’ma-ing* the mitzvot of the Holy One will inevitably lead to *going after other ‘elohim’* – i.e. falling under the spell of ideas, concepts, ideologies, philosophies, political, economic, and/or scientific/social-scientific theories, social justice rhetoric, etc. The great free-fall that started at the trapdoor of making excuses to *lo-sh’ma* the Holy One’s mitzvot will then continue to the point that we actually start and therefore worshipping the human leaders, warriors, statesmen, sages, demagogues,

entertainers, athletes, and institutions that promote and give physical form to such abstractions.

The Choice That is Set Before Us: It All Starts With Activation of Moshe's Pathway Recognition Protocols

In parsha *Nitzavim* Moshe is going ask us to choose which of the two pathways he is showing us we will choose to follow. These pathways have very different degrees of difficulty, present very different kinds of landmarks, waystations, and challenges, lead us in very different directions, and take us to very different destinations. The first challenge of *Re'eh* is therefore one of 'pathway recognition'. Do we discern the predominant 'spirit' and mood of each pathway? Do we sense the vast differential in intimate communion with the Holy One that adheres in these two pathways? Do we realize the consequences for us, our family, our bloodline, and all our spheres of influence, of potentially making the wrong choice?

One of these two pathways, Moshe prophetically assures us, will lead to a life of *unfathomable blessing* and *ever-growing shalom*. If we follow that pathway, Moshe assures us, the Holy One will establish our lives as *a fountain of blessing not only for ourselves and our families but for everyone we meet*. If we choose to follow the other pathway, however, Moshe assures us that what it will lead to is a life of *perpetually chasing after the wind*, of *miserable failure after miserable failure*, and of ever-intensifying despair. That pathway, Moshe warns us, promises only to become around us *a swirling vortex that will relentlessly drag our lives – and the lives of those we love – downward into a pool of toxic spiritual waste*.

If that were all there were to it the choice between the two paths would be easy. Who in their right mind would not opt for the pathway that leads to blessing? Who possessed of their faculties would choose perpetually chasing after the wind and drowning in a swirling vortex of toxic waste? Ah, but there is a 'catch'. The first pathway, you see, is *the Bridegroom's pathway*. The 'catch' is that if we choose that pathway it will be *the Bridegroom's will* that will determine our every step and *the Bridegroom's glory* that will have to be the reason behind everything we do. His pathway is well lit, and its boundaries are clearly defined - but it is a *pathway of absolute, unconditional surrender*. The second pathway is the exact opposite. I call it *the way of the Runaway Bride*. It is the way of choice for *self-willed souls who do not want any Bridegroom – or anyone else, for that matter - telling them what to do, or how to think, or where to go, or how to live*. The second pathway Moshe wants us to *re'eh* [behold] is the *'I did it my way'* pathway. It is the *'Have it your way'* pathway. In reality it is not a pathway at all – it is instead a vast no-man's land, like an *unmarked outback*. It is dark and shadowy. It has no boundaries. What at first look like exciting trails one could follow turn out to be

dead-end paths that never take you anywhere – just drain you of your strength and passion for life.

Moshe wants us to know that the choice of which of these pathways we will pursue is totally up to us. He wants us to choose wisely. But we will not have much time to make our decision. As the parsha gets underway the two pathways will begin to diverge quickly right before our eyes. Moshe wants us to make an *informed choice* between those pathways. Prior to calling upon us to make our choice between the pathways therefore he will prophetically empower us to *look a little ways down each of the two pathways that he has set before us* so we can get an idea what various aspects of life will be like depending on which of the pathways we choose. The aging prophet is about to spend several verses in *Re'eh* prophetically assisting us to see/perceive/appreciate the significant distinction between the two pathways in the most important sandal-meets-the-sand particulars.

The First Two Areas of Divergence

The first two areas of divergence made visible for us by Moshe are fascinating ones. First of all, he will show us – if we have *eyes to see* - the divergence between the way in which we will, in a prelude to the end times, deal with people and things that have fallen under our Bridegroom's fiercest judgments. Moshe wants us to see that *the way we think about and deal with people and things upon which our Bridegroom has decreed destruction will differ markedly depending on whether we choose the Bridegroom's Pathway or the Way of the Runaway Bride*. More on this a little later in the shiur.

Secondly, Moshe will show us that whichever pathway we choose we will eventually engage in some form of *religious activity* that we will think of and call 'worship'. What that religious activity will look like – and *what fruit it will produce* in us and in our world – will also differ drastically *depending upon which of the two pathways we choose*. **WARNING:** To the religious spirits in us what Moshe is going to say and show us in this regard has the potential to be very painful - like the debridement of dead and dying tissue from a wound. As Yeshua would later teach: ***Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*** Matthew 11:6; Luke 7:23.

Behold – the Different Commitments to Divine Justice of those on the Bridegroom's Pathway as Opposed to those on the Way of the Runaway Bride

We stand poised to cross the Jordan River and take possession of our Promised Land. That is an exhilarating prospect – but one that presents some interesting challenges. The first challenge is *how we are to deal with the people – and the*

culture – we are called to dispossess. Who are these people, anyway? Moshe calls them *Kena’ani*. The traditional English transliteration of this word is *Canaanites*. This people-group are first mentioned in Genesis 10:18 as descendants of Noach’s son Kena’an, who dishonored and disgraced his father and was thereby placed under a curse. **Genesis 9:25.**

The area in which Torah says Kena’an’s descendants settled⁴ after the Flood is described as “... *from Tzidon as you go toward Gerar as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah Admah and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.*” Hmmmn. Did you realize that the residents of S’dom and G’morrah upon whom the Holy One rained down fire and brimstone were *these very same people*? For some reason these people are under judgment from the Holy One. They are *His enemies*. And for that reason, and for that reason alone, if we are in covenant with the Holy One, they are *our enemies as well*. Part of walking the pathway of the Bridegroom, you see, is to let Him and Him alone decide who will be our friends – and who will be our enemies. I told you the first pathway is the path of complete and unconditional surrender.

What does the Holy One say we are to do in relation to these people? Moshe says we are to dispossess them. And he further says if we follow the Bridal Pathway here is what the aftermath will look like:

You will utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you will destroy their altars, break their [sacred] pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

When the Holy One your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them after they are destroyed from before you ...

[Deuteronomy 12:2-3, 29]

Is It Okay With You that You And Your Descendants Will Be Falsely Labeled as “Zionist Devils” and “Evil Occupiers”

Are we actually to destroy all the sacred sites of Kena’ani religion as soon as they abandon them? Are we actually to obliterate all the cultural symbols they venerated? If we do what the Holy One tells us to do ... well, if we do *what will*

⁴ Subgroups within the Kena’ani ethnic group include the *Hittites* [descendants of Kena’an’s second-oldest son, *Chet*], the *Amorites* [descendants of *Emor*, the fourth son of Kena’an], the *Perrizites*, the *Hivites* [descendants of *Chivi*, the sixth-born son of Kena’an, and the branch of Kena’ani one of whose princes raped Ya’akov’s daughter Dinah], and the *Jebusites* [descendants of Kena’an’s third son, *Yebus*]. The descendants of Kena’an’s firstborn son, Sidon, were apparently the ones simply called by the generic title *Kena’ani*.

people think and say about us! This is definitely not the way to ***Win Friends and Influence People***. There is not one whisper of ‘political correctness’ anywhere to be found in those Divine instructions. Would it not be easier just be ‘tolerant’ and ‘live and let live’? Ah Beloved, in this case that kind of idealism is simply not left to us as an option.

The Holy One wants every trace of the Kena’ani worship centers and every single idolatrous image or icon they venerated to be DESTROYED from His Land. He is the Owner/Landlord of Eretz Yisrael – and He is evicting not only the Kena’ani people but every single one of *the demons they rode in on*. He apparently does not want any of us or any of our children looking at those worship centers or images and getting curious. He wants us to remember what happened at ***Ba’al-Peor***. Perhaps the Holy One knows something we do not about the extreme toxic and corrupting nature of the belief systems, icons, and local worship centers of the Kena’ani. And perhaps the Holy One knows a little something about us and our fascination with graven images [as evidenced by *chet ha-egel*⁵] and local worship centers [as evidenced by *chet ha-b’not Moav*⁶] as well.

So ... here is the first test of the week of parsha ***Re’eh***: how much fear of man do you still have? And how does the amount of fear of man you still have compare with the amount and quality of fear of the Holy One you are presently walking in? Is the Holy One your *King* – or just your *self-actualization protocol*? Are you going to be okay with being thought – and regularly called - closed-minded, intolerant, and bigoted ‘Zionist devils’ and ‘illegal occupiers’ by the people of your day? Let me put it another way: Is the Divine Bridegroom’s presence, intimate fellowship, and approval going to be enough to keep you inspired, motivated, thankful for the gift of life, and on mission? Or is *feeling good about yourself* and walking in *social/cultural acceptance* something you simply cannot live without?

If the Holy One’s ways are going to offend you in that manner, it is better that you find that out right up front. So Moshe shines the light a little way down the Bridal Pathway, and says ‘***re’eh***’ [Behold!] So ... is it going to be all about Him, and what He wants and says is right? Or is it going to be all about you, what you want, and what you think is right?

There Really Is Something Bigger Going On, You Know!

⁵ *Chet ha-egel* is Hebrew for ‘the calf sin’. It refers to the sin of Covenant people with the golden calf, in the early days at Mount Sinai.

⁶ *Chet ha-b’not Moav* is Hebrew for ‘the sin involving the daughters of Moab. It refers to the sin of the Covenant people with the gods of the Moavi people, which was committed at the instigation of Bila’am, while Israel was encamped on the plains of Moav awaiting the order to cross the Jordan and take possession of the Land.

There actually happens to be a very good reason why the Holy One is going to dispossess the Kena'ani of the land in which they dwell. The Holy One has made it clear to us all along that the land these people groups have claimed as their own is not theirs, but is His. He designed this land for and promised this land to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov and to their descendants forever. So these people groups are flagrant usurpers of the Holy One's Holy Land. Moreover, for centuries now these people groups have been *horribly defiling the land* by practices so abominable that they are unspeakable in polite company. The Kena'ani are *far, far from innocents*. They are the same kind of people who populated S'dom and G'morrah. Their whole approach to life is rape, pillage, torture, and the cruel enslavement other peoples at the point of the sword. They offer human sacrifices to bloodthirsty gods. They burn their own babies in the fires of the altar of Molech. What is more, they have been given opportunity after opportunity, over multiple generations, to embrace the more excellent way of the Avrahamic covenant [as did Elazar the Syrian], and they have refused. Meanwhile the innocent blood of multitudes of helpless victims of these peoples' bloodlust cries out to the Holy One from the earth. As a result, now these people groups are in the final stages of Divine Judgment due to multiple generations of unspeakable abominations.

Moshe prophetically declares that is the judgment of the Holy One our God that these peoples must be excised from the land - lest the pollution of the land continue even one more generation. Do we *trust His judgment*? Will we *join Him in what He is doing*? Do we *believe He is the fountain of all wisdom*? Do we believe that the Holy One is a cruel monster Who hates the individual men and women born into these people groups?

Those who know the Bridegroom-King through walking with Him know that He is not a monster. They know that every single individual member of the societies we are called to displace is deeply loved by Him. Those who know the Holy One know that the Holy One has been very patient, and very graceful, to them over the last several generations. He has in fact sent them *a veritable parade of messengers* to call them to turn from their wicked ways.

The Multiple Messengers and Messages the Kena'ani Refused to Heed

First of all the Holy One sent them *Melchi-Tzedek* – the '*Righteous King*, and '*Priest of the Most High God*'. Melchi-Tzedek dwelt in their midst and his lifestyle testified of the Holy One's righteousness right in their midst. They were unmoved. The Holy One also sent into their world men like Avraham, Avraham's Syrian-born servant Elazar, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, and the young dreamer Yosef. All of these demonstrated before their eyes the blessing of walking in the covenant lifestyle. They claved to their perversions. The Holy One therefore raised the stakes, sending

these wayward people groups two dire warnings. The first was in the form of an invasion by four kings of the North [Genesis 14]. The second was the supernatural destruction of their two most perverse cities, S'dom and G'morrah [Genesis 19].

In the days of Yitzchak and Ya'akov the Holy One sent these nations even more warnings – *famines* [Genesis 26 and Genesis 41] and *blood-vengeance genocide* [Genesis 34]. Despite these dire warnings and the 'more excellent way' example of our forefathers, the people residing in the land have refused to turn from their perversions and abominations. They have responded to the Holy One's overtures by *hardening their hearts* and *increasing the perversity of their lifestyle and the frequency and nature of abominations they practice* even more. The Holy One has therefore made it clear that *for the good of the rest of Creation* a surgical removal of those peoples and their way of life is necessary. He has therefore promised to go before us into that land and inflict crushing judgments designed to drive out those usurpers who will *flee the wrath to come*, and to prepare who are just those too stubborn to flee to die by our swords. Our *human intellect* wants to cry out '*This can NOT be God's Will*', and our *hearts of flesh* in their misguided naiveté want to rebuke Moshe, saying '*Surely there is a way we can all live together with the Kena'ani in peace and harmony!*' That, I believe, is *exactly the point of Moshe's message*. Moshe is intentionally *offending our minds and hearts to make us re-evaluate our level of commitment to our Bridegroom, to our covenant with Him, and to His plan for the ultimate redemption of humanity and Creation*.

Moshe is bringing us face to face, right up front, with perhaps the toughest part of our calling as the Holy One's Bride-to-be. Moshe is doing so to challenge us, and cause us to consider the issue of ***are we – or are we not – 100% sold out to THE BRIDEGROOM to THE COVENANT, and to THE MISSION?*** The prophet of the Exodus is confronting us with this tough issue at this season in time to force us to ask ourselves some very difficult questions—questions like: Will you join your Bridegroom in whatever you see Him doing, and do whatever tells you to do, no matter how much your mind may be offended and/or your flesh repulsed by it? Will you trust your Bridegroom's judgment over your own? Will you trust Him to know better than you who His enemies are, and when their time of judgment comes? Will you trust Him to have a vastly better perspective than you on what is necessary for the good of mankind and Creation? Will you trust Him to have a better understanding than you as to whether people groups can 'live in peace' and antithetical cultures can coincide in the same land? Will you trust Him to in grace make a way of salvation for the truehearted Rahabs that live among the Kena'anim?

What Does This Have to Do With Us Today?

At the present moment there are no Kena'ani nations that we are called upon by our Bridegroom to destroy⁷. But the prophets assure us that there will again be a time when the people of the Holy One will be called upon to join our Bridegroom in executing His Divine Judgments on flesh and blood. Psalm 2 tells us that when the appointed time of judgment is come – after all other options have been exhausted – the Holy One will crush nations who conspire against Him with *a rod of iron*. He will *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*. Revelation 19 says *in righteousness He will judge and make war. He will smite the nations with a sharp sword. He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress*. Will He have to *tread it alone*? Will we be offended at Him and His Ways? Will we shrink back in fleshly revulsion? Or will we join with Him in what He is doing, declare ***'Just and true are Your Ways Oh Lord!'***? Which pathway will you choose – the Bridegroom's pathway ... or the way of the Runaway Bride? The Friend of the Bridegroom wants to know.

Behold — the Different Modalities of Worship on the Bridegroom's Pathway as Opposed to the Way of the Runaway Bride

The second area of divergence that Moshe is going to present to us follows up on this theme. Moshe wants us to consider in light of the instructions he has given in parsha *Va'etchanan* – and particularly in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – *how (i.e. by what kind of visible, tangible, actions, and in what location and context) we as the people of the Holy One will "worship" Him - individually and corporately?* Moshe wants us to understand clearly that *even in the context of worshipping our God* some activities and approaches men pursue and call 'worship' can open a fountain of *b'rachah* [blessing] on the earth – while others open a fountain of *q'lalah* [cursing]. *Bridegroom's worship and Runaway Bride's-way worship*, we are about to discover, look very, very different – and have very, very different fruit. Will true worshippers of the Holy One copy the way other nations (Egyptians, Kena'anim, for instance) worship their "gods"? Or will the Holy One call forth from His people a totally different way of worship - a way *echad* [unique, One, Wholly other] like He is *echad*?

Please note that Moshe does not stop at simply telling us to destroy the Kena'ani altars, Asherah poles, and high places. That is just the beginning. It is *not even his main point*. After Moshe tells us to destroy the vestiges of Kena'ani worship, you see, he goes on and says very clearly:

Lo ta'asun ken

⁷ The Arab peoples who presently reside in Eretz Yisrael are not Kena'ani. They are, like us, descendants of Shem. The Kena'ani, on the other hand, were descendants of Cham.

Do not make/build/do [what the pagan nations around you make/build/do].

I'Adonai Eloheichem
in regard to the Holy One
[Deuteronomy 12:4]

Did you *catch that*? Moshe's point is not simply that we are to worship the Holy One alone and reject the gods of the Kena'ani. That point has been made very, very clear ever since the theophany on Mt. Sinai. A Betrothed Bride should cleave only to her Beloved – that is axiomatic. Moshe's point here is not simply that we are forbidden to engage in the abominable Kena'ani behavior like offering human sacrifices and burning babies in the fire. Moshe's point goes much, much deeper than that. He is telling us that we are to *reject the entire format and concept of worship the people of the nations of Kena'an followed*. We are talking about *two pathways* here. We are being prepared to make an informed decision to 'choose life'. We do not need to be under any delusions as to which pathway is which.

Is It Time to Take A Close Look At Everything We Have Been Taught by Men to Do in the Name of 'Assembling' and 'Worship'?

This dramatic instruction, given by Moshe so soon after the prophetic call to *re'eh*, should call upon all of us to examine our religious practices - individual and corporate - and compare them with the instructions of Torah. Because, Beloved, *the central and essential principle* the Holy One establishes for us concerning how we are – and are not – to 'worship', appears to be, I repeat for emphasis:

Do not do *[what the pagan nations around you do in regard to their gods]*
in regard to the Holy One
[Deuteronomy 12:4]

This is an *eternal message* – a message about *the modalities the Kena'ani and the people other nations employ in worshipping their 'gods'*. To those with eyes to *re'eh* is not what Moshe is saying that the modalities the pagans use to worship their gods are *anathema* to us – and are *not to be part of our lives* or our worship of the Holy One? In light of this, perhaps has the time has come for a people who claim to be the people of the Most High God us to go back and examine all our current 'worship' practices in light of this essential '*do not do in the name of the Holy One the things they do in the name of their gods*' principle of Torah? Has the time come for us to have the courage to actually stop and take an honest look at all our religious practices and activities – and to do so with *re'eh* eyes? Is it the Holy One's plan, at this time of year, as the Days of Awe draw nigh, for us to take a good hard look at which of our modalities of worship lie not on the pathway to, and open the fountain of, *b'racha* [blessing] Moshe has laid out for us, but lie instead on that 'other' pathway – and open instead that 'other' fountain?

Is It Possible That Moshe Is Talking to US

As Much as He Was Talking to THEM?

The question Moshe is addressing with regard to worship practices cannot be whether we will worship other gods. The question Moshe is addressing is actually much more offensive. It is whether in our worship of the Holy One we are worshipping Him in the way He instructs and desires for us to or are merely *copying the ways the pagans around us worship their gods*. Are we, for instance, trying to worship the Holy One by using *the same modalities* our pagan neighbors use to worship their gods? Do we set up local altars and priesthoods in mini-temples that serve as community centers the way they do? Do we schedule and conduct meetings *the way the ungodly schedule and conduct meetings*? Do we make music to the Holy One in the same way they make music to their gods? Do we clap, or shout, or sing songs, and/or dance before the Holy One *the way they clap, shout, sing songs and/or dance* before their gods? Do we take [and give] offerings the way they take [and give] offerings? In other words, do we worship the Holy One *after the pattern established in Torah* – or *have we merely taken a Divine Name and superimposed it onto a pagan local altar/local priesthood religious system designed by man in the exercise of false religion*? Is what we are doing in those buildings truly assembling and worshipping and serving the Holy One *the Torah way* – or is it ... well ... er ... ***something else?***

The Sounds of Silence

Alright, if you are still here after all this, *well ... uh ... can we talk?* I mean, is it just me, or has anyone else out there noticed that there is not a single mention anywhere in any of the Five Books of Torah – or any of the Prophets or Writings – or for that matter in any of the Gospels or other Apostolic Writings calling for us to build a public building in the community in which we live for use as either a *synagogue* or a *church*? Has anybody else noticed the absolute absence from Torah of any instruction from the Holy that we *build any kind of local worship center, join any form of local congregation, or decorate any buildings in our communities with objects of religious artifacts*? Has anyone out there found anywhere in the Torah an instruction from the Holy One indicating that we are to hire either a rabbi or a pastor to call us to assemble at regularly scheduled ‘religious services’ or to teach us or our children religious truths? Has anyone heard, or pondered the meaning, of these ‘sounds of Scriptural silence’ about what has in our day become the central feature of both organized Judaism and organized Christianity?

Please do not misunderstand. The purpose of this *shiur* is not to condemn. This is not a ‘bashing’ exercise. I am not into pointing fingers or attacking others’ religious practices. By no means am I calling for a rebellion, a revolt, or even, for that matter, reform, of institutions of religion. All I am asking *is do we, at this point, dare to stop and figure out the TRUTH?* Or do we simply love our traditions

too much to even consider the fact that in many cases they do are just not *Biblical*?

This is an Important Issue of Spiritual Destiny

Do we want to *sh'ma, sh'mar*, and *asah* Torah the way the Holy One instructed and prophetically empowered us to do – or do we just want that ‘old time religion’ we inherited from our fathers? Do we want to be the light to the nations, the nation ‘set apart’, and the beacon in the night, and a faithful witness to mankind and all of Creation of the Holy One’s great plan of redemption and restoration we are called to be – or do we just want to attend meetings in our communities of exile with like-minded believers in comfortable, air-conditioned, buildings bearing our favorite religious *images d’art*. Are we really so enamored with steeples, crosses, and Eucharistic symbols [on the Christian side], and/or stars of David, *menorot*, etc. [on the Judaism side] that they are more important to us than what the Torah of the Holy One says?

Has the idea of worshipping the Holy One become merely a matter of personal preference and individual taste? Is worship now more about making us feel good about ourselves, our doctrines, our programs, our musicians and song leaders, our liturgies, and/or our clergymen than about *exalting and honoring the Glorious Bridegroom*? Worship is supposed to be about *declaring the beauty* and publishing the *awesome wonders* of the one to Whom we have been betrothed, is it not? Our modalities of worship as set out in the Torah were strategically designed by the Holy One to form an important part of the prophetic footprint we as the Holy One’s Bride are called to leave in the sands of the realm called time, are they not? Our worship is supposed to be ‘on earth as it is in Heaven’, is it not? So why does it all too often look and sound like an Amway convention, or a shareholder’s meeting, or a rock concert, or a political rally – depending upon which local worship center you happen to walk in on a day on which the clergy or board of directors of the tax-exempt corporation or non-profit limited liability company has decided to schedule ‘religious services’? Is not the worship footprint we are supposed to leave supposed to be the size and shape of the Torah, and nothing else? Will this be the generation that decides to finally let the Torah’s instructions as to how, when and where we are to worship and assemble trump our *traditions* and *religious orders* and *convenience*? Could a people be arising who will settle for nothing less than worshipping the Holy One according to the actual instructions of the God we are supposed to be worshipping?

Putting it All Under the Microscope

This week, as part of the *Re'eh* challenge, Moshe is going to call upon us all to submit all our worship practices – all our meetings, our music, our models of spiritual ‘leadership’, our prayers, our study methods – indeed everything we do in the name of ‘worship’ and ‘service’ – to *the microscope of Torah*. It is about time. It is about time for us to let the microscope of Torah reveal, as to every worship modality in which we participate, both *of what it consists* [*i.e.* to what extent it is and is not Torah-consistent] and *what fruit of righteousness it is producing* in us, in our children, and in those in our circle of influence [*i.e.* to what extent what is coming forth from it is *the blessing* spoken of in the opening verse of parsha *Re'eh* – or is instead flowing out of things which are clearly under *the curse!*]. The point of such an examination is not to condemn others, or any religious “system”; the point is much higher than that – *i.e. to return one’s own self, and one’s own family, to Biblical worship patterns*. We must, of course, let the Holy One deal with others, and unBiblical religious systems, as - and when and how – He, and He alone, sees fit. He is more than able. And He cares more about how He is worshipped - and the effect that has on the lost souls among the nations - than you or I ever could.

But Wait - How Do Other Nations Worship Their ‘Gods’?

The first and pre-eminent instruction the Holy One gives to His Redeemed Community is that ***we are not to worship the Holy One our God the way the peoples of Kena’an [Canaan] worshipped their gods***. Whatever the Kena’ani did by way of religious practice toward their gods, we are absolutely NOT to do toward the Holy One. So, you may say, exactly how did the *Kena’ani* [Canaanites] worship their deities? What was the essence of the worship practices we are now being instructed to *avoid like the plague*? Some things are obvious - things like child sacrifice, cult prostitution, icons, and the well-known excesses of Kena’ani ‘temple worship’ we instinctively label as abominations. Interestingly however Moshe does not even address, much less focus on, such things. Why? Because those things are so patently inconsistent with Torah, and so thoroughly covered elsewhere, that there is no need whatever for Moshe to address them with us now. He thinks that we know better than that. We certainly should. Did not the incident at Babel, the sad episode of the calf-sin, and the debacle of *Ba’al-Peor* teach us anything? So instead of focusing his attention – or ours – on the obvious evils of Kena’ani child sacrifice, Kena’ani cult prostitution, and the like what Moshe is inspired by the *Ruach HaQodesh* to warn us about is something that just may hit a little closer to home.

To *re'eh* the implications of what Moshe is saying in the opening aliyah of the parsha of Divinely Enhanced Vision we need to look closely at the specific practices in which the Kena’ani – and all other nations since the Tower of Babel,

for that matter - have engaged in the name of worship. The procedure, it turns out, is virtually universal. Whatever the specifics of the religion or the culture it seems the *modalities* of worship have been pretty much consistent. The people of the nations have, wherever they lived, done three things:

First, they have built themselves an altar or altars to serve their locality.

Second, they have elevated some of their number to clergy-status.

Third, they have established conveniently located public worship centers for religious services conducted by those who have been elevated to clergy-status, at which worship centers they build sacred shrines and/or temples decorated with religious art.

The three things listed above have formed the structural underpinnings of virtually every religious system that has ever existed on the face of the earth. They were a part of the Babylonian religious system out of which the Holy One called Avram and Sarah. They were a part of the Egyptian religious system out of which the Holy One delivered our forefathers with a mighty Hand and an outstretched Arm, and with great signs and wonders. They were a part of the Kena'ani religious system which the Holy One instructed us to destroy, building by building, stone by stone, pillar by pillar, altar by altar, religious image by religious image. They were, of course, not fully destroyed by the generation who entered the land under Y'hoshua – or any of their progeny. Instead, they were slowly incorporated into the religion known today as 'Judaism'. They were an essential part of both the Greek and Roman religious systems. They have likewise become incorporated into the religious framework of the religion known as Christianity - hence we have churches and seminaries and preachers and buildings after buildings after buildings with steeples, the walls of which are decorated with artful images of crosses and descending doves and of the 'sign of the fish'. They have always been, and remain to this day, an integral part of the religion known as Islam - hence we see in our cities a proliferation of mosques and imams and buildings after buildings after buildings with minarets, the walls of which are decorated with artful images of crescent moons, scimitars, and Korans. The symbols, the modes of dress, the language, and the songs the people sing change with the religion – but the underlying structure remain pretty much the same:

- An *altar/shrine*;

- A *clergy-class* more knowledgeable in religious matters than the average man and woman;

- A *building decorated with the symbols of the religion*, built solely for, and dedicated almost exclusively to, the holding of religious meetings in the name of a revered deity. Hmmmnn. Does all that sound uncomfortably *familiar* to anyone besides me?

If We Just Have One God, Should We Have More Than One Altar And/or Place of Assembling for Worship?

Torah makes it clear that the way the Holy One is worshipped should be totally different from the way pagans worship their 'gods'. And how are we to assure it is different? Torah tells us that as well - in no uncertain terms:

***Take heed to yourself that you don't offer your 'burnt offerings' [Hebrew olahot]⁸
in every place that you see; but in the place
that the Holy One shall choose in one of your tribes, there you are to
offer your burnt offerings, and there you are to asah all that I instruct you to do.***
[Deuteronomy 12:13-14]

In verses 5-7 of our aliyah the Holy One establishes the type of worship activity to which He calls us - one geographical location in all the world to which all the Holy One's people would journey - not each day or each week, but for Biblically directed and described festivals, and to celebrate His provision.

***... to the place which the Holy One your God will choose
out of all your tribes, to put his name there,
even to his habitation, you are to seek, and there you are to come;
and there you are to bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes,
and the heave offering of your hand, and your vows,
and your freewill-offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock:***

***There [and only there], in the presence of the Holy One your God,
you and your families are to eat and rejoice in everything you have put your hand to,
because the Holy One your God has blessed you."***

[Deuteronomy 12:7]

The worship of the Holy One, if it is true to Scripture, is *not to be anything like the heathenistic pattern man has followed since the Tower of Babel*. What could the Holy One be saying to us? Towards the end of today's aliyah Moshe writes:

***Take heed to yourself that you not be ensnared to follow them,
after that they are destroyed from before you;
and that you not inquire after their gods, saying,
'How do these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.'***

***Whatever thing I instruct you, that be careful to do:
do not add to what I instruct you, nor diminish from it.***

[Deuteronomy 12:30, 32]

Could it be that instead of training our families in a simple lifestyle of true moment-by-moment, day-by-day walking with the Creator of the Universe as Moshe taught us to do in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we have embraced elements of a Kena'ani-like religious system? And here, surrounded by local worship centers of

⁸ The Hebrew phrase for 'burnt offering' is *korban olah*. This 'first step' to intimacy with the Holy One is addressed in *Monday's Aliyah* of parsha *Vayikra*. See *the Rabbi's son's* commentary to that aliyah [chapter 1 of Leviticus], for a refresher on the *korban olah*.

our own designs, with program after program, and service after service, could it possibly be that is why we and our children often find ourselves perishing for *lack of knowledge* [Hebrew *da'at* – intimate, personal, life-style molding interaction with the Holy One]? Hmmmmn. What exactly was that Moshe said about becoming *ensnared*?

Re'eh-ing – And Dealing Appropriately With it All - the Gold, the Silver, and the Wood, Hay and Stubble

In light of how utterly *fragmented* and *divorced from the Torah* of the Holy One our world has become it is clear that local worship centers can, and sometimes do, at least shed some small amount of light into the darkness of the world around us. Hence it must be recognized that removal or abandonment of such centers now would create a spiritual vacuum in many lives that could have traumatic, if not tragic, repercussions for some people. Such is the nature of any addiction, dependency, or co-dependency. ‘Cold-Turkey’ withdrawal is always difficult – and sometimes deadly. And while for the reasons stated in this *shiur* I do not believe for a moment that local worship centers will continue to exist in either the Messianic Age or in the World to Come, I realize fully that the time in which we live is neither of those, and that, here and now, on the physical earth where you and I eat, drink, work, sleep, and raise our families, there is no true Torah-based kingdom where the *sh'ma* lifestyle of Torah is modeled for everyone to emulate.

I fully realize therefore that *barring a major upheaval in the way things are done on earth* local worship centers are - sometimes for good and sometimes for evil - going to remain fixtures on our respective landscapes for the foreseeable future. I do not by any means expect religious institutions to close their doors any time soon. I should not be misinterpreted as advocating that such entities *should* close their doors. Remember, all I am doing is responding to the theme of this week of looking ‘*up to Jerusalem*’. I am just trying to cause you to aspire for the ‘*more excellent way*’ Moshe tried to describe for us. The point of this study – and the rest of the studies this week – therefore is not *from* what you or I should *leave*; it is *to* what and to *Whom* you and I should *cleave*. The call you should hear from this *shiur* is not a call to leave anything – but a call to cleave to the words of the Holy One of Israel - to cleave to *His Torah*. The call you should be hearing is a call to cleave to *Messiah*, the living embodiment of the Holy One’s Torah. The call you should *sh'ma* is a call to be the *responsive* Bride He has created and empowered you to be. The call you should be hearing is the call to *sh'ma* the Voice of the Holy One and *lo sh'ma* the voice of mortal men. The call you should be hearing is the call to teach the *mitzvot* of Torah faithfully to your children, and to speak of them as you lie down and as you rise up, as you sit in your home and as you walk by the way. The call you should be hearing is the call to *raise up children in the way that they should go*. The call you should be hearing is the call to *sh'ma* the instructions

for living the Holy One has given us in Torah and to *sh'mar* and *asah* them - and in that manner to *set ourselves apart from all other peoples and nations of the world and unto Him*. If you spend your time and your energy in *those* pursuits, Dear Reader, you will do well – and, whatever happens in the buildings in your communities with religious art and marquees, your life and your home will be the fountains of life, joy, peace, and blessing the Holy One wants them to be.

Put Down Your Sword!

Right before our eyes – if we have eyes to see in the spiritual realm – Moshe is causing two pathways to appear. One pathway leads to *a fountain of blessing* – the other to *a polluted fountain of bitter waters*. Each of us will soon have to choose *which pathway we will follow*. Many of the messages the Holy One will speak to us this week through Moshe are therefore - like the messages the Holy One spoke to us through Yeshua - going to sound radical. They are supposed to. They are designed by the *Ruach HaQodesh* to *confront our complacency*, to *challenge our preconceived notions*, and to *offend our religious spirits*. This is to *break us out of our comfort zones*, to cause us to look at the things that presently seem so important in our lives from *a larger and more eternal perspective*, and to then inspire us to *press on in the direction of the destinies for which we were created* and to which we are being called.

The 6th month – the month when the King is in the Field - is just around the corner. Now is the time for us all to invest time and energy in prayer about what we do privately to please men and corporately in the name of ‘worshipping’ the Holy One. Consider therefore putting away all the commentaries and doctrinal theses, just opening your Bible to Deuteronomy 12, and simply reading it through for yourself a couple of times. Look for the *theme* and *essence* of what the Holy One is saying. Then inquire directly of the Holy One what the message of Deuteronomy 12 is for you and for your family. If and to the extent you feel that any aspect of the message of Deuteronomy 12 is indeed a now word for you and your family, ask Him what practical steps you can take, in line with the instructions for living He has given, toward fulfilling your destiny and becoming, and helping your children become, who you - and they - were created to be. And then, whatever the Holy One tells you, *sh'ma*, *sh'mar* and *asah* that. That is after all the sum total of what this study series is about – finding the Holy One’s perfect will for your life, and *moving in that direction*.

Questions For Today’s Study

1. Our parsha begins in chapter 11 with the declaration that the Torah presents two “ways” – a way of *blessing*, and a way of *curse*.

[A] In Strong’s Concordance and Gesenius’ Lexicon look up the words our

English Bibles translate as “blessing” and “curse” [Hebrew word #s 1293 and 7043]. You may also wish to look at the discussion of these words found in Richards’ “*Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*” or in some other word study guide. Then *explain what you think Moshe is talking about in Deuteronomy 11:26-29.*

[B] Turn ahead to Joshua and read Joshua 8:30-35. Then look at the Bible Atlas and find the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. [Hint: look near the city of Shechem].

2. Let us examine the first area of instruction Moshe gives us regarding specific life activities – the basic instructions concerning WORSHIP. Moshe does not in this passage discuss the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle], which by this time sat at the center of the camp, or the Temple which was to come, the altar, or the priesthood, and he barely even mentions either the *korbanot* [approach offerings/sacrifices] or the *mo'edim* [feasts/festivals]. He assumes the instructions concerning relationship with the Holy One 101, as found in Leviticus 1-9 and 23, are understood and appreciated. He is not talking to novices. We are supposed to know the Holy One’s instructions about what to do, when, and how. He therefore addresses us on *an advanced level* – telling us *how to recognize, and how to deal with, aberrational ‘worship’ activities.*

[A] In Deuteronomy 12:4 [NIV] was the Holy One talking about [cautioning against] **idolatry**? If not, what exactly was He talking about [cautioning against]?

[B] Why did the Holy One not want an altar to Him built in every community, *on every high hill and under every green tree*?

[C] Why did the Holy One not want His People to worship in local worship centers? What about that is dangerous?

[D] What do you think worship of the Holy One as described in verses 5 and 6 would look like?

[E] With whom did the Holy One say we were to engage in public worship [i.e. with whom were we told to “eat and rejoice” in His Presence]?

[F] List the ways in which current religious practice violates the instructions of the Holy One as to how He is to be worshipped.

3. According to Deuteronomy 12:11 where was the *only place the Redeemed of the Holy One were supposed to participate in public acts of worship*?

4. What do Deuteronomy 12:12 and Deut. 12:17-18 indicate the public worship events of the Israelites were to be like?

5. This week’s haftarah – the third of the seven *haftarot* of consolation - begins with Isaiah 54:11-12.

***You afflicted ones, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;
behold, I will set your stones in beautiful colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.***

*I will make your pinnacles of rubies, and your gates of emeralds,
and all your border of precious stones.*

[A] What city is the Holy One talking about in this passage?

[B] Why is that city so important?

[C] What do you think the status of modern-day Jerusalem has to do with you and your family?

[D] Read Revelation 21:1-2,18-21. Write a description of Jerusalem as you think Yeshua sees it.

6. Our apostolic scripture reading for today is I John 4:1, which reads as follows:

*Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of the Holy One,
because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Yochanan [John] tells us that everything that sounds like it is spiritual is not Godly, and that “false prophets”, who sound very spiritual, are everywhere, and are listened to more than the voice of our Divine Bridegroom. And I have news for you: some of these ‘false prophets’ can “read your mail” prophetically. Some can win converts like crazy. Some can “heal the sick and raise the dead”. Most really know how to draw a crowd, and coax “amens” and “halleluyahs” from the faithful by saying what people want [or want someone else] to hear. It is all very seductive. Yochanan warns us of this and seeks to draw the hearts of the Holy One’s people back to the *sh’ma* concept of Torah – the only antidote for *false prophecy*. Only those who do not know how to (or who, though they know how, refuse to) *sh’ma* the Holy One are misled by false prophets or spiritual teachings that are not from God. Once one has heard the Divine Bridegroom’s voice with ears to hear, as Messiah Yeshua said, they “***know [His] voice, and they will never follow a stranger; in fact they run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.***” **John 10:4-5.** Knowing the Torah – and the Giver of the Torah - is the antidote for false prophecy, Beloved. One cannot be deceived who listens only to the Holy One’s voice.

[A] What do you think makes someone a “false prophet”?

[B] Look up the word “false” in the dictionary, and write a definition of “false prophecy”.

[C] If a prophecy doesn’t come from the Holy One, where do you think it comes from?

*May your ears be ever attuned to hear His Voice,
and may you not trust the voice of any man,
who tells you to act in a way inconsistent with what the Holy One says in Torah.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 112:1-3

Praise the Holy One!

*Blessed is the man who fears the Holy One –
Who delights greatly in his mitzvot.
His seed will be mighty in the land.*

*The generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house.
His righteousness endures forever.*