

Introduction to Parsha #47: Re'eh¹

READINGS: ***Torah:*** **Deuteronomy 11:26 - 16:17**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 54:11 - 55:5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I John 4:1-6**



Behold

[Deuteronomy 11:26]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 1, *Da'at*, the Prayer for Knowledge

Re'eh – *Behold ...* ***anochi noten lifneichem hayom*** – *I am placing before your faces this day ...* ***berachah uklalah*** – *a blessing and a curse.* **Deuteronomy 11:26.**

Moshe is climbing the rigging. Up he goes into the ‘Crow’s Nest’. He gazes out into the future. Revelation is coming – and the substance of it is going to be stunning. It will be so stunning, in fact, that few will be able to accept it. In the midst of laying out the BLUEPRINT for the GREAT HEAVEN-SCENTED-SOCIETY the Holy One wants us to build upon the earth, Moshe is going to let us know that what we are called to do is not a leisurely vacation in either a tropical or mystical paradise, but a long, dangerous, intense, and bloody fight to the death for the souls of men – first of all for our own souls, but also and those presently living among the raging nations that the Holy One wants to use us to awaken to the higher calling of spiritual reality.

The View from the Crow’s Nest

Up to this point in his exhortations on the Plain Moshe has content to speak in generalities, and lay out the essential foundations upon which we are to build the great society of redeemed. That is about to change. In light of what he is seeing no from his assigned perch in the prophetic ‘crow’s nest’, he is about to get specific and very, very practical. He has to. The stakes are too high to speak any more in platitudes. Gird up your loins, Dear Reader. Whatever you think you are seeing

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around you – and whatever you think the future entails – climb the rigging with Moshe. Step into the crow’s nest with him – and *look again!*

Before we do that though, I need to ask ... how are your optics working? How is your eyesight? What is coloring your worldview? How is your depth perception? How is your peripheral vision? How are your powers of observation? Upon what do you let your eyes focus? To what sort of visual stimuli do you typically tend to respond? What outcome of the Covenant walk do you let your imagination explore? How do you ENVISION yourself, your family/bloodline, and the Covenant Community as a whole impacting Creation? How do you look at and feel about the various cultures, classes, ethnicities, ideologies, philosophies, religions, tribes, tongues, and chromosome pairings that currently make up the Adamic/Noachic lineage the world thinks of as ‘humankind’? When you look at yourself, at your spheres of influence, the generations that are coming forth, and the world in which you live, what perspective are you doing the viewing from, what lens are using, and WHAT DO YOU SEE? Are the objects in your rear-view mirror closer than they appear? And has your front windshield become too bug-splattered to allow you to see the Beauty Realm manifestation that lies ahead? Just remember:

*Where there is no vision, the people spit the bit.
They ignore the reins, and they become lawless.
But he who cherishes, treasures and guards the Torah
keeps going straight without deviation.*

Proverbs 29:18 [Rabbi’s son translation]

***Light is the Key to Strategic Movement;
Seeing is the Key to Transcending;
Having and Holding Onto a Kingdom Vision for the future
is the Key to Building a Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society***

The gift of sight is a wonderful thing. Sometimes – indeed most times – however, our field of vision is obscured, obfuscated, and/or self-limited. Sometimes – indeed most times – we need someone who sees more – or from a higher vantage point – than we inhabit to help us see what we cannot. What is unseen, you see, is always far more important – and oft-times eminently more real – than what is seen. So, along comes Moshe. He sees things we can’t see. And so, he bends low, gets our attention, and whispers softly: “*What are you looking at, child?*” What – and who – are you letting occupy your field of vision? What – and who – are you letting frame your narrative and define your matrix of expectations? What – or who in this world - has attracted your focus? What – or who - in this world has garnered your attention? What – or who in this world – had captured your affection? What – or who – are you letting influence your beliefs, color your

opinions, dictate your attitudes, and manipulate your emotions? What attracts you? What repels you? What are you letting inspire you – and what, on the other hand, are you letting intimidate you? And why, for Heaven’s sake, are you looking DOWN HERE, amidst the profanity, the pig slop, and the chicken scratch, for anything of eternal significance or value?

Welcome, Beloved, to Moshe’s ‘*Come Up Here, and See What I See*’ Discourse!

We Have Once Again Entered a Crucible of Vision

As the Holy One did for Moshe at Sinai, in the season of former rains we know as *Terumah*, the prophet is now ready to bring us to a *critical crucible of vision*. He knows that that we are standing at a crossroads – but he also knows that we can’t see it. And so, he says: *Behold!* What does the prophet see that we can’t see? What does he want us to open our eyes wider to drink in? He wants us to see two very different pathways diverging before our eyes. One promises purpose, peace, and potential for positive impact; the other promotes propaganda, pontification, and pandering politicians.

Which of the pathways that stretch out before our eyes will we choose to follow – and which will we choose to eschew? The choice we make at this critical crossroads will determine both the quality and the degree of impact, for ‘good’ or for ‘evil’, we will be able to have on the world. The destinations to which these pathways lead are worlds apart. There are vast differences in *the types of scenery* that will be encountered - and *the quality of the companionship* that will be experienced - along the way. Moshe wants to help us make the right decision. He wants us to be under no illusions as to where each of these pathways lead. He begins his ‘*Come Up Here, and See What I See!*’ Discourse with this stunning introduction:

Re'eh anochi noten lifneichem hayom berachah uq'lalah

Behold! I set before your faces today a blessing and a curse.

[Deuteronomy 11:26]

If Just For a Moment We Could See Through Heaven’s Eyes

Are you ready to move forward – and choose a pathway? Don’t be too sure. There are things that are right in front of our eyes – but which we are not seeing. The spectrum of our vision – *i.e.* what we have been looking at and for, focusing on, and seeing – needs a substantial upgrade. Before we step off into the critical crossroads that lies before us, and make a fateful choice, Moshe calls us all to a fresh, future-oriented vision and perspective.

Oh, Dear One! Have you had enough of *not knowing*? Have you had enough of *stumbling around blindly* toward an *undefined destination*? Have you had *enough*

propaganda? Enough hype? Enough money-grubbing in the name of religion? Enough skewed statistics, misleading half-truths, and outright lies? Enough demagogues-for-hire? Enough emotionally charged rhetoric? Enough ideological soapboxes? Enough political blustering? Enough fear mongering? Enough nitpicking? Enough self-righteous finger-pointing? Enough mudslinging? Enough gossip, accusation, and innuendo? Enough hate spewing? Enough inflammatory labeling? Enough race-baiting? Enough class-envy inciting? Enough blame throwing? Enough clever marquis phrases? Enough clichés? Enough condescension? Enough weaponized opinions being tossed at you like grenades? Enough agenda-promoting theories masquerading as ‘science’, ‘information’, and ‘education’? Enough feigned outrage? Enough manipulation? Enough backstabbing? Enough ‘spin’ and deception? Enough delusion! Enough myopia? Enough Yada! Yada! Yada!, Blah! Blah! Blah! and Rah! Rah! Rah!? I hope you have had quite enough of all of those things, Dear One. Moshe has. He is ready to cut through the religious nonsense and pretense, and tell it to us straight. The time has finally come for a true, Divinely-appointed prophet to speak – and for us, the people of Holy One, to *re’eh!* So *open our eyes, O Holy One, as well as our ears*, that we may clearly see what kind of future lies ahead for us, for us and our progeny ... *if we choose to walk in Your Ways – or, alternatively if we foolishly choose that other path.*

Open Our Eyes That We May See ...

Moshe has called all Israel to assembly. He wants our ear – and if we are wise we will give him our rapt attention. His face is glowing. His eyes are shining. His words are falling upon our ears like spring rain on the meadows of *Eretz Yisrael*. His message is sweet as honey on our tongues, but bitter as vinegar on our stomachs. Moshe’s final assignment on earth is to release the download of *d’varim* the Holy One intends to use to train us, our children, and our children’s children, to serve as the highest earthly representatives of His Kingdom, His Character, and His Will. Moshe’s Divinely empowered *d’varim* are entering our ears like guided missiles, embedding themselves in the soft tissue of our hearts - and are beginning to change our worldview, our self-concept, and our priorities from the inside out.

Moshe knows that we are called to serve our Bridegroom-King at a greater level than even he has himself. His job is just to release over us the prophetic words that will mold us into Bride-like ambassadors and emissaries of the Kingdom of Heaven. *Moshe* is therefore about to kick into an even higher prophetic ‘gear’. In *Re’eh* the *prophet* is going to take his instructions – and all who will *sh’ma* what he says - up to an unbelievable ‘other’ level of revelation and insight. In *Re’eh* the man to whom the Holy One has spoken Face-to-face will start downloading wisdom from Heaven at a pace never before seen. Rapid-fire bursts of revelation

will start to pour from his lips. He will start condensing all the visions and wisdom downloads he has received over the past 40 years into weighty words of human language – *i.e. devarim*. With only 36 days remaining on the planet, he will conduct his swansong debriefing in vivid detail. He is prophetically empowering ordinary human eyes like ours to perceive exactly what the lives of people who have been redeemed from bondage by the Great Bridegroom-King are supposed to – and should gradually begin to - look like. O Holy One, as the words of your prophet-turned-rabbi fall like rain on the plains of Moav, please open our eyes wide so that we may finally begin to see ourselves, our relationships, the nations, the world, and the purpose of each *as You see them!*

The Eight Critical Tests Introduced During the Week of Re'eh

This week Moshe intends to introduce us to *eight specific areas of life and experience* that are going to severely test of our devotion to the Holy One and His Ways. The eight areas of testing Moshe wants to teach us to recognize and deal with are:

1. *The Challenge of Our Free Will* [11:26-32]
2. *The Allure of Our Neighbor's Convenient Religion* [12:1-31]
3. *The Din of 'Other Voices' that Compete for Our Attention* [13:1-12]
4. *The Soul-Numbing Sensuality of the Pagan Worship Models Our Neighbors Utilize to Worship Their Gods* [13:13-19]
5. *The Temptation of Culturally Accepted Self-Destructive Behavior* [14:1-2]
6. *The Slippery Slope of Corrupted Appetite* [14:3-21]
7. *The Misunderstanding and Misuse of Material Provision* [14:22 – 15:23]
8. *The Test of Divine vs. Natural Timing and Rhythm* [16:1-17]

The key to successfully navigating through these critical areas of testing – *i.e.* the key to seeing the issues involved for what they are, making the right choices at the key moments, and walking dry shod through the transition - lies in the parsha's very first word. That word is *Re'eh*. In English we translate this as an injunction. We say: “*Behold!*” *Behold* indeed. If we are to successfully navigate the narrow road that leads to our destiny we must be able to see the obstacles, distractions, irritations, and seductions that appear before us as they really are – not merely as they appear to our natural eyes to be. We must behold them, finally seeing where they fit in with *the bigger picture*. We must learn to look at such things through the lens of the role they play in the Grand Redemptive Plan of our Bridegroom-King. Only then can we know whether the appropriate course – *i.e.* the Will of the Holy One - is for us to navigate *through those obstacles, distractions, irritations, and seductions* or is to *politely decline and just step around* them.

We need eyes that can see from a better perspective than ground level. Obstacles look far too daunting, and temptations look far too tempting - for those who only

have *'eyes on the ground'*. At every turn we need more than creed or conscience – we need *'eyes in the air'* that can see the *bigger picture*. We need Divinely enhanced vision, to see *through* and *beyond* the obstacles and seductions which confront us – to what is *really going on*. We need eyes that can *re'eh* – *i.e. BEHOLD!* - *what the consequences of each of the alternative actions we could choose would turn out to be.*

Getting Acclimated to the Sh'ma Lifestyle

Heretofore in *Sefer D'varim* the most important revelations Moshe has downloaded have begun with the prophetic word/cue *'sh'ma'*². As we have discussed previously, *sh'ma* is the Hebrew verb which describes the entire *alef-to-tav* process of *tuning in to another's frequency, listening for that person's voice alone, paying rapt attention to that person's words, and then doing what that person says because you trust that person to know what needs to be done*. The prophet has thus been teaching everyone with *ears to hear* what the *Ruach* was saying to make the Holy One's words and directives the biggest priority in life. Those of us who have heeded the prophet's call to step up to the *sh'ma* level immediately discovered what Moshe experienced 40 years previously at the burning bush. It was *exhilarating*. It continues to change our entire perspective of the purpose and meaning of our life. We begin to hear – and get excited about – what the Holy One is saying.

The *sh'ma* level of revelation we *tremble* at the sheer power of our Divine Bridegroom's Voice. We become *captivated* by the transcendent beauty of the prophetic declarations He makes over us. We *surrender* our wills, our minds, our emotions, our opinions, our theologies, our philosophies, our doctrines, and our traditions to the incontrovertible wisdom of his instructions for living.

The Kindling of the Divine Spark

The *sh'ma* level of relating to the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven is what I call *the level of the Divine Spark*. Every time the Holy One speaks – or we even think of His Words – it is as if a gust of wind blows over the smoldering embers of our souls and causes them to burst into flame anew³. The *sh'ma* realm is now the primary portal of connection to the Divine life-source in which we live, move, and have our being. When we tune our hearts and ears to the Voice of the Holy One it is as if *flaming tongues of fire from Heaven begin to pierce the darkness*

² In *Ekev* Moshe employed this verb to describe our primary way of relating to the Holy One a total of 17 times. He used the verb in this way in the following verses: Deuteronomy 4:1, 6, 10, 12, 30, 32, 36, 5:1, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 6:3, 4, and 7:12.

³ This is the potentially life-changing counterpart in our lives today of Avram's Genesis 12:1-3 experience, and of Ya'akov's Genesis 28 awakening, and of Moshe's burning bush encounter.

surrounding our lives like bolts of lightning pierce the night during a late summer storm. Spiritual shock waves seem to *blow open our clogged ear ways.* The sound of His Voice suddenly becomes in our ears like the sound of many waters. The substance of His Words suddenly become more real than the weather and more to be desired than silver, gold, or honey from the honeycomb.

Moshe has taught us that *sh'ma*-ing is far, far greater, far more demanding, and vastly more rewarding than mere *obeying* could ever be. Obeying, we have discovered, is all about *self-interest* – a combination of *fear of falling from favor or being punished and/or a hope of reward.* *Sh'ma*-ing, on the other hand, flows out of intimately knowing the Holy One and being totally engrossed in His Beauty. Obeying, we have discovered, is just performance-based legalism, while *sh'ma*-ing is relation-building intimacy. Obeying is for soldiers and slaves; *sh'ma*-ing is for lovers. Obeying is a work of the flesh – *sh'ma*-ing is a *lifestyle.*

The *sh'ma* level of revelation is thus a realm of spiritual experience that is *light years* ahead of ordinary religion, theology, ethics and creed. But as wonderful as it is, Moshe wants us to know that the Will of the Holy One for His Beloved is that the *sh'ma* level of revelation is *just the beginning.* The Holy One does not want us just to have a heart that inclines to Him and ears to hear what He is saying – He also wants those He loves with a Bridegroom's love to have eyes to see what He is doing.

Introducing the Next Level – the Realm of Divinely Enhanced Vision

Think back to Sinai. There we did not merely hear the words the Holy One spoke from the *Radiant Cloud* of His Manifest Presence – we also *saw* them. We received them not only as *auditory stimuli*, but as *visual stimuli* as well. We *beheld* their glory and their beauty. Moshe's *d'varim* are following the same revelatory pattern. On the heels of his introducing the *sh'ma* level of revelation he is going to introduce us to the visual aspect of Divine Sparks. I call this level of illumination *the level of Divinely Enhanced Vision.* At this level of God-man interaction the Covenant Partners of the Holy One do not merely see, however, they BEHOLD. Hence Moshe begins the parsha of Divine illumination not by enjoining us to *sh'ma* – but with the injunctive cue “*Re'eh!* [Behold!]” Just as multiple candles lit simultaneously light up a room, so do a multitude of souls lit simultaneously by Divine Sparks illuminate everything around them. After all, if we should by now have spiritual ears to hear what the Ruach is saying. The question is, do we also have spiritual eyes to see what the Father is doing?⁴ Will

⁴ Messiah chastised the members of his inner circle on this very point, saying: “***Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart *still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?***” See Matthew 16:5-12; Mark 8:15-18.

we be able to handle it, and keep our equilibrium, when we discover in the course of experimenting with our newly enhanced visual capabilities that what the Father is doing has very little to do with the religious ‘beliefs’, religious organizations, and religious people which we hold so dear, but has everything to do with childlike submission to His Words and complete and unconditional surrender to His Will and His Ways? Before we get to that however we need to get at least a basic understanding of what the *re’eh*-ing Moshe has in mind for us looks like and consists of.

Eyes That See What the Father Is Doing

The first Biblical usage of the word *re’eh* [in its *qal* form, *ra’ah*] is found early in the Creation account. On the first day of Creation, immediately after the Holy One spoke light into existence, we are told: ***And Elohim saw [ra’ah] the light, that [it was] good: and Elohim divided the light from the darkness.***” Just before this, in Genesis 1:2, when the Holy One looked at the earth He did not just see the emptiness, chaos, and darkness the writer of Torah describes as *tohu v’vohu v’chosech*. He saw beyond that. He saw hidden somewhere in that darkness, chaos and emptiness something wonderful and sublime – He saw fullness, and order, and LIGHT just waiting to be released. And so, since He had a vision for so much more than was immediately apparent, He began to speak what He saw into being. The first thing He spoke into being was *ohr* – LIGHT. And when the Holy One looked again He did not see merely the pulsing nucleus of primordial light that hovered before His Face. He saw much, much more. He perceived perfectly the essential spiritual and physical reality inherent in the Light that He had spoken forth. He saw in light amazing *potential to release good things into every nook and cranny and living thing in Creation*. He saw light’s *potential life-giving effect on plant life, on animal life, on human life*. He saw light’s *capacity to showcase beauty and reveal His Creativity*. He saw beyond its present status and visualized *the good it could release*.

That kind of deeper seeing is what it means to *re’eh*. Understand therefore in reading the Torah that when a form of the word *re’eh* is used in the text it does mean not refer merely to the casual opening of your natural eyes to note the physical presence or external dimensions an object or spectacle immediately before you – it means to see the thing in question *from the Holy One’s perspective*. And realize that the Holy One *always looks first – and hardest - for the potential for good in whatever – or whoever He is looking at*. To *re’eh* is to see whatever the subject matter is that is under discussion *through Heaven’s eyes*.

Seeing People and Situations Through Heaven’s Eyes

The Holy One’s eyes are not like our natural eyes. The Holy One’s eyes always occupy themselves in searching out that beautiful, intangible, often invisible

substance called *potential* – the eternal, undying potential which He designed into every human being from the beginning of the world. He is absolutely confident all that every particle of potential, every pulse of creativity, every ounce of gifting, that He breathed, spoke or bestowed by Divine Hand during Creation Week is still alive somewhere in the world – even if no one else, even its possessor, recognizes it. His eyes are constantly scanning to and fro, through our ash heap of our lives and worlds, seeking some spark of life and creativity that He can rejoice over and bless. His eyes are always looking for the potential for good in us. He looks for the potential to bring forth good from every situation or circumstance in which we find ourselves.

Even when what we give Him to look upon is something we who having eaten heartily of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil consider to be blatantly and hopelessly evil, what the Holy One looks for is good - or at least a few scattered sparks of dormant, usable potential which He can use to bring forth good. That is why the Holy One – as opposed to us humans - is so very, very slow to give up on a prodigal - no matter how bad that prodigal happens to look or be acting at any given moment⁵.

Our Bridegroom-King sees a silver lining in every cloud. That means He sees more than just a way to overcome every obstacle; he sees a way to actually turn that around to make it redound to both our good and to His glory.

Pick Your Paradigm

As we try to access and walk in the Holy One's vision and perspective regarding the people and situations that lie before us it helps to begin the exercise in each instance by '*picking a paradigm*'. The Holy One has chosen to introduce Himself to us, relate to us, and disciple us through a series of paradigms. First, there is the 'CREATOR/SUSTAINER OF THE HEAVENS, THE EARTH, AND EVERY CREATURE AND CREATED THING THAT IS IN THEM' paradigm. Genesis 1:1 – 11:32. Next, He introduced Himself to us and taught us to relate to Him through the 'FAITHFUL COVENANT PARTNER OF AVAHAM, YITZCHAK, AND YA'AKOV' paradigm. Genesis 12:1 – Exodus 2:24. Thirdly, He chose to reveal Himself as and relate to us through the PASSIONATE BUT PATIENT, EVER-PURSuing BUT WILLING-TO-WAIT DIVINE BRIDEGROOM paradigm. Exodus 3:1 – 20:26. After we recoiled at level of the intimacy the BRIDEGROOM paradigm entailed, He introduced Himself to us through the WISE, VISIONARY RABBI, SAGE, and HOLY NATION-BUILDER paradigm. Exodus 21:1 – Numbers

⁵ If this thought seems out of touch with your view of the Holy One, please take a moment and read and meditate upon Exodus 34:5-9 and Romans 8:28 – 39 and you will begin to understand.

10:10. Then, for the wanderings of the Second Wilderness (between Sinai and the Plains of Moav) He shifted His mode of relating to us to the GOOD SHEPHERD paradigm and the FATHER OF ALL TRIBES, TONGUES, NATIONS AND BLOODLINES paradigm.

As you face each day, and as you encounter each person and each situation/challenge, it is important to do so conscious that the Holy One is doing so with you. It helps you to choose which paradigm you will use to relate to, converse with, and draw strength from Him. Will you pick the Creator paradigm – seeing all things as presently *tohu v'voahu v'choseh* [*i.e.* without form and void, and steeped in darkness] but capable of beauty, fruitfulness, shalom, and potential for good with just the right quantity and quality of input, inspiration, and nurturing from Him? Will you pick the Stronger Covenant Partner paradigm – focusing on what He is doing in the people and situations you face and joining Him in doing that and nothing else? Will you pick the Bridegroom paradigm – choosing to focus on His great love and wonderful plans for each of the people (even those who look like shrews to you) and His patient way of wooing those people and causing their strongholds to dissolve through mercy, firm-but-gentle discipline, and grace? Will you pick the Rabbi/Sage paradigm – looking to Him for counsel and wise, forward-looking ideas/protocols to pave a pathway of peace rather than leave a trail of wrath and scorched earth judgment? Will you pick the Good Shepherd paradigm – choosing to consider all men like sheep who have gone astray and are just in need of rescue and restoration and to see all challenges as just being the latest in a recurring series of still waters and green pastures on the one hand, and valleys of the shadow of death and tables set in the presence of enemies on the other hand? Or will you select instead the Father paradigm – approaching every person and situation with the prayer Yeshua taught us to pray to *Avinu* – *i.e.* ‘Our Father’ - on your lips and in your heart? Which paradigm you choose in each case will, to a greater extent than you could imagine, determine what aspect[s] of the Holy One’s personality and persona you bring to the table. Assuming, of course, bringing His personality and persona to bear on the people and situations you encounter is your goal – as opposed to just dumping your own flawed set of attitudes, opinions, emotions, reactions, defense mechanisms, habits, and beliefs.

Getting More Specific: Looking At All People, Things and Situations in Life Through Three Lenses

To understand how the Holy One looks at people, things and situations, imagine Him – Who dwells outside of time - seeing every person, thing and situation in the world through *three lenses at the same time*. Basically, tend to think of those three lenses as being 1. *past*, 2. *present*, and 3. *future*. But there is much, much more to it than just that. Imagine the first lens through which the Holy One views people and

situations – the one which humans tend to think of as ‘past’ - as being typified by Genesis 1:2. At that time the earth appeared to be without form, purposeless, and shrouded in mysterious, oppressive, directionless darkness. That is the way the things and circumstances and experiences that cause a person, thing or situation to be as they appear to our natural eyes to be at any given moment.

Why is a person depressed? Why is a parcel of land – or a womb - barren? Why is a body of water bitter? We do not know. We cannot see. But HE sees! He *re’eh’s*. But that is just the beginning. He then scans the same person or situation with the second lens.

The second lens of *re’eh* vision is typified by Romans 8:28. After carefully examining and diagnosing what is before Him through the Genesis 1:2 lens, the Holy One begins to brood over it, and apply His vast stores of Creative energy and Masterful Craftsmanship to it. In this manner He begins to both *bring the potential in the person or situation in question into Divine order* and to *set in in motion a growth process involving whatever He found salvageable in that life or situation*. And that is how He causes all things to *work together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose*. And still He is not through. He then applies the third lens of *re’eh* vision.

The third lens of the *re’eh* vision of the Holy One is typified by I Corinthians 3:12-13. The Holy One uses this lens to distinguish what about the person’s life or the situation is *gold* [*i.e.* a substance of pre-Fall Divine origin⁴], and what is *silver* [the product of co-laboring between the Holy One and man] and what is *wood, hay* and *straw/stubble*. He will wash the filth off the gold. He will purify the silver. And He will burn the wood, hay, and straw/stubble in the flame of His All-Consuming Presence.

How On Earth Are We Supposed to Do All That?

We are supposed to do what we see the Father doing. But what does this *re’eh empowerment* mean in real time? It means that just as He searches out the dormant seed of ‘good’ in every person and situation and focuses upon and blesses that seed of ‘good’ [see Genesis 1:2-4], so is He wanting to empower us to look at whatever person or situation He brings before us and see - and bless - the seed of good that those without a *sh’ma* lifestyle and *re’eh* vision cannot or do not want to see. And it also means that just as He sorts through everything that at first glance does not appear ‘good’ but then engages the second lens of *re’eh* vision to brood over that chaos, breathe His Breath into it, and apply the Creative Touch of His Master’s Hand to it until it too is transformed into something ‘good’ [see Romans 8:28], so He wants us to sort through the ashes we see before us and look for *sparks of potential good* that need work. Then He wants us to *focus only on that potential good*, and

co-labor with Him to bring that potential good into a higher level of visibility and functionality. But even that is not all. He also wants to empower us recognize what about the person or situation in question is merely the post-Fall physical/material product of the work of the hand of man – *i.e.* the irredeemable wood, hay and straw/stubble that has attached itself to the person or situation – and then to work with the Holy One break the person or situation free of that useless residue.

The Holy One sees a beautiful garden in every wasteland. He sees hidden sparks of glorious light in every swirling cesspool of *tohu v'vohu*. He sees a tremendous opportunity for transcendence in every trauma. He sees a wonderful life-enhancing lesson in every failure. He sees the seeds of wisdom and empathy growing in every heartbreak. He sees a redemptive testimony of His goodness emerging from every tragedy. He sees a Shulamite in every harlot. He sees a Glorious Bride in every selfish shrew. He sees a prince or princess in every filthy street urchin. And He sees a prophet, priest or teacher in every prodigal son or daughter. He sees a *potentially devoted spouse, father, or mother* in every person who soils his soul by engaging in fornication, adultery, or homosexual liaison, and He sees a *potential hero and life-giver* in every person who participates in perversions like murder, abortion, pornography, child molestation, and human trafficking. Look at Moshe's life. Look at David's and Yonah's [Jonah's]. Look at the lives of Sh'mon Kefa [Simon Peter] and Shaul [Saul] of Tarsus'. While you are at it, you might want to stop and take a good long look at *your* own life as well.

Alas, Some Choose to Have Eyes to See It – Some Choose Not To

To enter into the *re'eh* level of spiritual experience is to *tap into the Holy One's way of looking at things, and begin to look at things, people, and situations through the lens of spiritual 'eyes that see' into the Heavenly realm and the eternal purposes of our Divine Bridegroom.* That is exactly the level of 'seeing' to which Moshe calls everyone who studies this parsha. Those with spiritual eyes to see 'what the Father is doing' – and to visualize life lived in and according to the constitution of the 'kingdom of Heaven' about which Yeshua spoke in parables – will be enthralled, energized, and transformed by what we read this week. To others, however, the beauty of the truths of parsha *Re'eh* will be veiled⁶, and the things Moshe says this week will seem esoteric and archaic – if not nonsensical. For those people the prophetic messages Moshe is delivering in this very important week on the annual calendar will be quickly skimmed over - and just as quickly written off as inapplicable to them in any way.

⁶ The reason for the 'veiling' will in most cases be known only to the Holy One. Some will be dealing with a self-imposed 'veil' because when confronted with the revelations of parshot *Va'etchanan* and *Ekev* they deliberately *lo sh'ma*-ed. Whatever the reason for the veiling, the key is not to judge nor consider ones' self better or more spiritual than a neighbor whose eyes are veiled.

If you catch my drift, what Moshe is going to talk to us about this week – in the parsha that begins with the directive ‘*Re’eh ...*’ – is not something ordinary human beings – even redeemed ones - can see with natural human eyes. The subjects Moshe is going to discuss with us will require us to receive, appropriate, and utilize *Divinely aided prophetic vision* – vision as to that which lies at the spiritual essence and foundation of the things under discussion. Much as Genesis 1:4 tells us that the Holy One *ra’ah*-ed [beheld, saw, accurately perceived, and fully appreciated] the difference between the light He had spoken forth and darkness from which He had called it, and noted for all time the essence of the distinction between them, and directed His actions accordingly, so now is Moshe about to call upon us to behold, and see, and accurately perceive, and fully appreciate the difference between the pathways of *b’racha* [blessing] and *q’lalah* [cursing] he is about to describe, and to note for all time the essence of the distinction between them, and to direct our actions accordingly.

I say this to *warn you*, Dear Reader - if you try to ‘reason’ your way through this parsha with human reasoning, *you are going to miss it entirely*. Especially if you try to interpret what follows Moshe’s call to ‘*re’eh*’ through *a pre-determined grid of religion or theology* – be that pre-determined grid of Jewish, Christian, Messianic or other origin – you are going to miss it. You cannot just read this parsha and try to fit it into your existing doctrinal and/or theological framework. You absolutely have to *re’eh* it. This is a parsha that calls us out of every kind of box. It is a parsha that particularly challenges every pre-supposition of religion. It is a parsha that challenges every compromise. It is a parsha designed to stir a holy hunger for something more ‘good’ than anything we know – a hunger for HIM and HIS PERFECT THOUGHTS and HIS PERFECT WILL AND WAYS.

As you read this parsha please try to keep in mind that the Holy One sometimes *offends the mind to reveal the heart*. After all, our comfort zones *need* to be dramatically disrupted from time to time, lest we forget that life is a *never-ending quest to ever-deepen our relationship with the Holy One* and come closer and closer to His Messiah.

Keeping It All Squarely In The Context of the Times and Seasons of the King’s Calendar

The call to *re’eh* vision is a biproduct of the times and the seasons. As we read this particular parsha every year, you see, we are simultaneously being called higher – called *up to Y’rushalayim* [Jerusalem] for the High Holy Days. We are called to a dramatic change in elevation. And as we ascend the hills that surround Jerusalem *our perspective necessarily has to change*. Things, activities, conversations, etc. which seem relevant – if not essential – to our lives at the elevation at which we

normally live begin to look smaller and smaller, and less and less significant as we, from higher elevations, look back at whence we came. It is just a matter of elevation-perspective. At this time of year therefore it is altogether to be expected that the discussions of the subject matter of the Torah portion corresponding to the times and the seasons of the calendar of the Holy One will get a little uncomfortable. That is why reading parts of parsha *Re'eh* are sometimes as painful to the religious spirits that have taken up residence in us as debridement of dead and dying tissue from a flesh wound.

Are we okay with that? Do we understand it is all part of the process of going ‘*up to Y'rushalayim*’? Can we take a deep breath and plow forward, knowing our toes are going to be stepped on, our nerve-endings rubbed the wrong way, and our hackles raised by what we are going to read? Good. Then let's jump right in.

Come Up Here!

Heretofore Moshe has been primarily addressing the *hidden matters of the heart* – *yirat Adonai* [fear of God], *ahavat Adonai* [love of God], and the basic commitment to live a *sh'ma* lifestyle [that is, a lifestyle built around listening for and to, hearing, heeding, and surrendering to the Holy One's instructions for living – a lifestyle of *responding to* the Holy One as a Bride⁷]. But *dramatic change* is in the air. Beginning with the opening lines of this parsha Moshe challenges us to make our commitment 'real', corporal, tangible, and substantive. He is about to take his instruction from the *general* to the *specific*, from the *internal* to the *external*, and from the *invisible* world of what lies within a man's heart to the *visible* world of what lifestyle a man lives. Here is how the transition begins:

Re'eh Anochi noten lifneichem hayom

Behold! I set before you this day

b'rachah uq'lalah

a blessing and a curse:

Et-ha-b'rachah asher tishmei'u

the blessing, if you will sh'ma

el-mitzvot Adonai Eloheichem

the mitzvot of the Holy One your God,

asher anochi Metzaveh etchem hayom

with which I enjoin you this day;

v'ha-q'lalah im-lo tishmie'u

and the curse, if you will not sh'ma

el-mitzvot Adonai Eloheichem

the mitzvot of the Holy One your God,

v'sartem min-ha-derech

but turn aside out of the way

asher anochi Metzaveh etchem hayom

which I instruct you this day,

lalechet acharei elohim acherim asher lo-yedatem

to go after other gods/authorities that you have not known.

[Deuteronomy 11:26-28]

Faith Without Works Is Lifeless, Worthless, Zombie Faith⁸

Re'eh-ing is to *sh'ma-ing* what "works" is to "faith". To see what I mean, look with me at James 2:14-18:

⁷ More on this concept in the subsequent section of this shiur entitled 'Bridal Orientation'.

⁸ Hebraically I would render this well-worn phrase "*sh'ma-ing without doing mitzvot is a miscarriage of the Holy One's seed.*"

*What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works?
 Can that faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food,
 and one of you tells them, "Go in shalom, be warmed and filled;"
 and yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it?
 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself.
 Yes, a man will say, "You have faith, and I have works."
Show me [cause me to re'eh] **your faith from your works**
and I by my works will show you [cause you to re'eh] **my faith.***

Here is a little suggestion. Whenever you read the word “faith” in the English “New Testament”, pause for a moment, turn on your Hebraic mindset, and think *sh'ma*⁹. After all, even our English versions tell us that “*faith cometh by ... you guessed it – sh'ma-ing!*” Romans 10:17. Likewise whenever you read the word “works” in the English “New Testament”, engage your Hebraic mindset, and think *mitzvot* [i.e. walking with Messiah in, and thereby walking out on earth for all to see, the practical instructions for living set out for us in the Torah].

The *mitzvot* of Torah are something of the kingdom of Heaven which ordinary men and women can behold [re'eh]. Acted out by persons who *sh'ma*, the *mitzvot* of Torah take the awesome prophetic, creative words of the Holy One and cause them to become tangible, visible, and undeniably real. Hence the Hebraic meaning of the phrase Messiah taught us to pray: ***Your Kingdom Come, Your Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven***, suddenly becomes more clear.

The Relationship Between Spirit Direction and Torah-Submission

The *timing* and the *quantity* of *mitzvot* are to be “Spirit-led” – but the *substance* will never differ from Torah. The *Ruach HaQodesh* [Holy Spirit] – Who *wrote* the Torah - will simply not direct anyone to do ‘good works’ that are not set forth in the Torah as *mitzvot*.

Okay - you may want to *go back and read that last sentence again*. I will make it easier for you. I will repeat it. Here it is: The *Ruach HaQodesh* [Holy Spirit] – Who *wrote* the Torah - will simply not direct anyone to do ‘good works’ that are not set forth in the Torah as *mitzvot*. Exactly what ‘good works’ did you think Yeshua was talking about when he taught us “*Let your light so shine before me that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*¹⁰? Do you see it now? Yeshua meant nothing more - or less - than the *mitzvot of Torah*. Hence, our Rabbi’s next words were, appropriately enough ***“Do not think I have come to destroy the Torah ...”***¹¹ Yeshua was not talking about practicing “*random*

⁹ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles usually translate as ‘have faith in’, or ‘believe’, is, of course, *aman*, *alef, mem, nun sofit*. Being able to *aman* however is premised upon and dependent upon a *sh'ma* response to the Holy One’s empowering Word.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:15.

¹¹ Id.

acts of kindness”. Random acts of kindness represent a *worldly* philosophy, one that gives us, instead of the Holy One, the responsibility to determine what ‘nice things’ should be done for someone else. The Holy One does nothing at *random*. He does everything *according to a Plan*. There is therefore nothing *random* about the *mitzvot* of Torah. For people who are the Holy One’s – people whose souls respond to the Divine injunction to *sh’ma* and *re’eh* - *the Torah – not ‘random acts of kindness - is the Plan*.

Becoming Who We Were Created to Be

The Torah readings of parsha *Re’eh* inform us that once a man learns the fear of the Holy One and begins to love Him with all aspects of his heart, soul, and strength and to live by the *sh’ma* principle of responding to the instructions of the Holy One instinctively – what happens thereafter is that actions the world can “*re’eh*” (behold, observe, view, consider, etc.) - *naturally flow*. We can’t help it – it is *a part of who we are* as new creations. The Torah of the Holy One is written upon our hearts, you see, and *what is in one’s heart inevitably comes out of one’s mouth and directs what one’s hands, feet, and torso do* as he or she walks through life.

Torah is filled with the creative, prophetic power of the Holy One’s Breath, and is therefore tremendously powerful. It is designed to work in our lives like a self-propelled *internal combustion engine* that drives us to do the *mitzvot* of Torah! That is why Shaul of Tarsus could say in the same breath in which he reminds us that we are “saved by faith” alone:

*... we are his workmanship, **created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.***

[Ephesians 2:10]

The fact is we who have been redeemed by the Holy One were *created for mitzvot* [walking in and walking out the practical instructions of Torah]. Our “faith” was never intended to be a “private matter”. We are not to merely submit our minds and hearts to the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven – but also our hands, and our feet, and our eyes, and our mouth, and our perspiration, and, if necessary, our *very lifeblood*. We are created to be *Re’eh* submissive.

This Dance Is For Lovers Only!

What does the *Re’eh*-level submissiveness to which we are called by Torah this week look like? *Re’eh* submissiveness is observance of each specific *mitzvah* of Torah in a manner consistent with proper relationship with God – namely, in response to His Spirit’s prompting. He leads, we follow, as in a Divine dance. It is what Messiah was speaking of when He explained:

***I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught Me.
The One who sent Me is with Me;***

He has not left Me alone; Therefore, I always do what pleases Him.

[John 8:28-29]

The *Re'eh*-level of submissiveness that is called for by Moshe this week is that which was lived and taught by Messiah. Such a level of submissiveness and surrender to the Divine Will is dependent upon, but is a level beyond, *sh'ma* submissiveness. *Re'eh* tells us that *tender thoughts toward God are all well and good* - but makes it clear that whether such feelings are Biblical “faith” or mere mushy sentimentalism will be made obvious and visible to all by one’s *actions* over a lifetime – especially in relation to one’s *family members*, to *the poor*, to the *widow*, to the *fatherless*, and to the *foreigner*. *Re'eh* submissiveness tells us it is not how well one performs before a group of people at a religious gathering that matters – but *how one lives his daily life*. So ... how are you coming on that goal of developing a *listening ear, Beloved?* Have you begun to prize the Divine Bridegroom’s words and instructions for life more than friends or fashion or music or sports or business journals or crosswords or movies or television or even your “ministry”? Are His Words becoming the primary focus of your thought-life, conversation, and goals in life? If so you have begun to understand the *sh'ma* principle. Now you are ready for *Re'eh* - the actual *beholding* - and *making manifest* - of the kingdom.

Sh'ma-ing must precede and set the stage for *Re'eh-ing*. One must hear, and internalize the message of the Holy One and Messiah, before one can see [*Re'eh*] the kingdom, or enter the Rest prepared for him. Put another way, it could be said that one must have “ears to hear” before he can have “eyes to see”. But ... *see what?*

Empowered by Re'eh Vision Enhancement, Look Down the Road That Stretches Out Before You – What Is the First Thing You See?

In the Divine illumination which follows on the heels of *sh'ma-ing* the words of Divine Bridegroom the first thing we are supposed to see as we look down the road that stretches out before us is the stunning reality that *our words and actions in this world – like our Covenant Partner’s - have spiritual as well as physical significance*. We see, to our amazement, that our own words and actions operate like a fountain out of which spiritual realities – of one nature or another - flow into Creation. On the positive side we see that our words and actions can be a *refreshing fountain*, releasing into the world around us something our English Bibles call a ‘blessing’ [Hebrew, *b'rachah*]. But to our horror we also see that our words and actions can also be a *putrid fountain*, releasing into the world something altogether different from ‘blessing’ – something our English Bibles call a ‘curse’ [Hebrew, *q'lalah*]. And with Divinely enhanced vision we also see that the determining factor as to whether what flows from our words and actions into the

world around us is for blessing or for curse – *i.e.* whether what we say and do introduces *b'rachah* or *q'lalah* into Creation – is *whether and to what extent we sh'ma the Holy One's Torah*.

It is not, we discover, dependent upon our practice of either *philanthropy* or doing *random deeds of kindness*. Neither is it in any way dependent upon our funding of - or participation in - services or programs at any institution of organized religion. To bless the world instead of curse it we must do one thing alone – we must *sh'ma* the *mitzvot* of the Holy One. *Sh'ma*-ing the *mitzvot* of Torah is not about our earning our way to salvation, nor is it merely about us getting personally blessed or edified – it is *the key to the fulfillment of our mission*. *Sh'ma*-ing or *lo-sh'ma*-ing the *mitzvot* of Torah will determine whether our lives release blessings upon the earth during our 'such-a-time-as-this' the way the Holy One has called us to do – or will instead make waves of negativity, start ripples of offense, wounding, arrogance and frustration, and leave as a legacy a bubbling fountain of toxic waste instead of the majestic flowing river of living water His Words empower us to release.

The Second Thing the Illumined Soul Beholds

We have learned that the first thing a soul is supposed to 'behold' in the spiritual realm once that soul *sh'ma's* the Holy One's words is the stunning truth that *our words and actions on earth have spiritual as well as physical significance*. But that is just the beginning. The Divine Sparks are lighting up the night once again. Let's look carefully at what the illumination of the Divine Sparks reveals *this time*.

The second thing we see with *re'eh* vision is the stunning inadequacy, indeed the *pettiness*, of the religious stuff that looked so impressive until the Divine Sparks opened our eyes and showed us the spiritual reality behind the great façade. When the Divine Sparks shine their light into the religious practices that prevail in our world we suddenly can see that *worship services* are not at all what we thought they were. Now that we have 'eyes to see', Moshe shows us how much of an *abomination* the most prevalent 'worship' model in the world – the worship model followed for centuries by the Kena'ani toward their gods – really is. Before the week is over we may fairly ask ourselves whether there are any similarities between the Kena'ani worship model, which Moshe declares to be an 'abomination' to the Holy One, and the 'worship' models well-meaning people utilize every week – indeed every day – without even thinking about where they came from. Before our study concludes we owe it to at least ask the question whether the religious structures which presently dot the landscapes of the cities, towns, and villages of our 21st Century world more closely resemble [a] the Divine, ideal model which Moshe prophetically called us to *re'eh* [behold] in Torah, or [b] the Kena'ani model of religion Moshe rightly condemned as an

'abomination' to the Holy One. To be able to understand why this question is both relevant and reverent, we need to understand that in the past two parshot, *Va'etchanan* and *Ekev*, what Moshe has been doing is laying out for us, line upon line, precept upon precept, an ideal picture of how the Holy One is to be worshipped by His *sh'ma* people. That ideal model, we have found, is brilliant in its inspiration, yet stunning in its simplicity. Let's consider its essential elements one at a time.

First of all, did you ever notice that Moshe has nowhere suggested that we delegate the responsibility for our religious education – much less that of our children – to religious organizations and/or paid clergymen? To the contrary, the Torah model Moshe has been announcing very clearly calls on us to teach our own children the *mitzvot* of Torah. **Deuteronomy 4:9-10; Deuteronomy 6:7 (a); Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Deuteronomy 11:19(a)**. Secondly, did you ever notice that nowhere has Moshe suggested to us that we need to gather together in public meetings in the towns and villages we are going to build for ourselves to pray, to study, or to worship? To the contrary, the Torah model Moshe has been announcing to us very clearly establishes the primary situs at which *sh'ma* people are to worship the Holy One, pray, and study His Torah *as in their own homes*. **Deuteronomy 6:7(b); Deuteronomy 11:19(b)-21**. Thirdly we will discover early in parsha *Re'eh*, in the few instances when Torah calls for corporate worship in the Redeemed Community [as explained in detail in parsha *Emor* (from Leviticus 23), and in parsha *Pinchas* (from Numbers 29)], Torah shows us a *re'eh* revelation picture of that occurring at *set times* and on *pre-established redemptive themes*, at one and only one central location. What was that one central location? The Holy One calls it *ha-makom asher yivchar ha-shem* [*i.e. the place where I choose to place the Name*¹²]. **Deuteronomy 12:5-8**.

Hmmm. The Divine sparks of Torah indicate, to our surprise, that there should not to be one place of corporate worship for you and your family, another for me and mine, and still another for someone else and his. Torah indicates that when corporate worship is what is involved *more* places are not better.

Ha-Makom [The Place] – the Holy City That Our King Plans to Build! Not a Tower built by men for men's glory – but a Shining Lampstand Lit by Heaven to Illumine the Way!

One of the most important areas of experience Moshe will force us to deal with this week is an issue of geography. He will begin to introduce us to a new concept the Holy One is going to reveal – a physical city on earth that is *to be exclusively*

¹² Torah never specifies the precise geographic location of where this site is to be. Torah refers to the site only as "*the place where the Holy One will choose to place the Name.*"

dedicated to the worship of the King of Heaven. David will get such a vision for this city that he will make this city our national capital. Sh'lomo will erect the Holy Temple there. And from that point this physical piece of geography will become the center point of the focus of earth's inhabitants forever.

We are to be the first to see this city for what it is in Heaven's eyes. Well, the first after Avram and a priest named *Melchi-tzedeq*, I should say. Or perhaps the first after Yitzchak and a ram caught by his horns in a thicket.

The words of the Holy One indicate that corporate worship – and full-out kingdom rejoicing - was to take place at one place only. What place? Where is *Ha-makom asher yivchar ha-shem*? Because it is the site designated by the Holy One for the presentation of the *ma'aser* [tithe]¹³, and any and all freewill 'offerings', as well as the site to which we travel to celebrate the *sh'losh regalim* [pilgrimage festivals]¹⁴ and to re-enact the 7-year *ha-k'hel* ceremony¹⁵, and because it is to be the seat of Torah justice¹⁶, *ha-makom asher yivchar ha-shem* can be nowhere other than Temple Mount, called Moriyah, in the holy city of Y'rushalayim - the place where Avraham bound Yitzchak, and where Shlomo was allowed to build the Temple of the Holy One.

The hallowed ground of that particular spot is forever designated as *Ha-Makom* - the place - for ALL corporate celebrations and communal worship activities of the Holy One's people.

What About Those "Other" Places We Have Built?

Of course, there are a lot of buildings where religious activities are carried on in the name of the Holy One each week that are not on Mount Moriyah. What of them? If you have ever entertained the question of why, despite what Torah says, every community seems to have multiple places specifically designed to serve as sites of corporate gathering in the name of the Creator, we should, I suppose consider the distinction between practices that do and do not constitute 'corporate worship'. Getting together in groups on a Shabbat or a *yom tov* to make *Kiddush* and *Ha-motzee* is clearly not a prohibited practice of 'corporate worship'. See **I Corinthians 11:20-34**. Coming together at a time when a brother or sister has a specific need to confess sins, or to receive - or agree with each other talmidim of Yeshua in - prayer, are also not prohibited practices of 'corporate worship'. See **James 5:14-16**. It also clearly is not a prohibited 'corporate worship' practice for a person to gather with someone else, or some small group, to:

¹³ Deuteronomy 14:23-25; See also Isaiah 2:3-4, Micah 4:1-3, and Zechariah 14:16.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 16:2,6, 7, 1, 15, 16, and 22.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 17:8-10.

[a] publicly read and teach from the Torah, the prophets, or the apostolic writings [see I Timothy 4:13; II Timothy 4:2],

[b] share with other talmidim ‘a *word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation of a tongue*’ intended to strengthen the Holy One’s called-out ones,

[c] submit words of prophecy one has received for evaluation by a *beit din* of mature talmidim [see I Corinthians 14:26-32]

[d] speak to other talmidim ‘*with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*’ [see Ephesians 5:19], or

[e] publicly rebuke and/or cut off from association a person who, despite having received warnings issued in love to cease and desist, persists in violations of Torah warranting the *karat*-penalty [see I Corinthians 5:1-14].

But still, the question must be asked in each case – are we missing something that Torah was trying to tell us about corporate worship? Is it possible that in many instances the structures and altars at which ‘worship services’ are conducted weekly in modern times – at altars far from the *Mish’kan* [Tabernacle] or *Beit Ha-Mikdash* [Holy Temple] – have become in our day like the ‘golden calf’ altars which Jeroboam built at such places as Dan and Bethel?

Remember now, we are just *asking questions*. So put down those *stones* – and pick up one of the paradigms we mentioned earlier in this shiur.

Taking a Good Hard Look At What We Do

Moshe tells us pretty plainly that if we truly love the Holy One more than religious shrines, traditions, and systems, and if we truly *sh’ma* the voice of the Holy One and truly value the teachings of His Torah more than the traditions and teachings of mortal men, we have a responsibility to ‘test the spirits’ of every religious activity very carefully. We are called to periodically examine and re-evaluate absolutely everything we and those with whom we associate do in ‘real time’. Parsha *Re’eh* makes it clear that this responsibility extends to *all phases of life* – from *the substances we consider food to the holidays we observe*, to the way we relate to the poor and disadvantaged within our sphere of influence, to *the ways – and even the times and seasons - in which we engage in private and corporate worship*.

If we have ears to *sh’ma* and eyes to *re’eh*, and value Torah more than tradition, we will be called to deal with it – indeed to *embrace the process* of re-examination and testing. And if we have ears to *sh’ma* and eyes to *re’eh* we will joyfully shed patterns of behavior and belief that do not match up with Torah and will humbly ask the Holy One to help us realign ourselves with Torah’s instructions.

Haftarah Re'eh

Isaiah 54:11 - 55:5

This week's haftarah is the 3rd of the 7 '*haftarot of consolation*' that we read following Tisha B'Av. In this Haftarah Yeshayahu [Isaiah] prophesies of the future of the Land of Promise - a future of peace, of security, and of righteousness. This Haftarah begins with a beautiful ode sung by the Holy One [through His prophet] to Y'rushalayim, His Holy City:

*Afflicted, storm-tossed, and disconsolate - Behold:
I will set your stones in fair colors, and lay the foundations with sapphires.
I will make your pinnacles of rubies
your gates of carbuncles and all your walls of precious gems.
And all your children will be taught by the Holy One;
great will be the peace of your children.
In righteousness you will be established. You will be far from oppression,
for you will not fear; and you will be far from ruin, for it will not come near you.*
[Isaiah 54:11-13]

The haftarah will include the beautiful invitation of the Divine Bridegroom to all that thirst to ***come to the water and drink***, and to ***come, buy wine and milk without money and without price***. Isaiah 55:1. It will then conclude with the promise to Y'rushalayim that:

*Behold, you will call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you will run to you - because of the Holy One your God;
for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you.*
[Isaiah 55:5]

Consider the substance of this great promise. A nation of people that does not know the Holy One will actually *run to us* – because the Holy One will *draw them*. Who are these people? How will He draw them? He will pour out His glory upon *us*; and when they see the Glory of the King of the Universe resting upon us ... well, that is when – and why - they will *run to us*. And when that happens they will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy One is indeed God. *May the things the prophet has declared in this haftarah occur quickly, in our lifetime!*

The Corresponding Apostolic Writings

I John 4:1-6

In this week's reading from the apostolic writings, *Yochanan* [John] will caution us concerning *false prophecy* and discuss the essential principles we need to know for *discernment of spirits*. Yochanan will begin with a solemn warning to all the Holy One's people that 'false prophets' have gone out into the world, accompanied by a strong admonition that we are to ***test the spirits, whether they are of the Holy One***. But Yochanan's purpose is much more than to warn and admonish us. He intends to *equip* us as well.

*By this you know the Spirit of the Holy One:
every spirit who confesses that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is of the Holy One,
and every spirit who doesn't confess
that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is not of the Holy One,
and this is the spirit of the anti-messiah, of whom you have heard that it comes.
And it is in the world already.*

And before it is over Yochanan will also *exhort* us with powerful words of comfort:

*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them;
because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.
They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world sh'ma's them.
We are of the Holy One. He who knows the Holy One sh'ma's us.
He who is not of the Holy One doesn't sh'ma us.
By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

How are we are to know if a man or woman in a leadership position is truly operating through the Holy One or is at best in error, and at worst serving some other “god”? Is it possible that the test we are to apply in such an analysis is the same one Yeshua advocated, saying:

***Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least instructions of Torah,
and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven***

[Matthew 5:19]

If we truly *sh'ma* Yeshua is it not logical that the question we would ask concerning anyone desiring us to join, follow, or support their “ministry” is *whether the Torah is – or is not - the substance of that person’s life and teaching?* If the Torah of the Holy One is not the substance and essence of the person’s life and message, they may be great speakers, and may have winning personalities, but should the Holy One’s *sheep follow them?* After all, whatever a man may profess, confess, or proclaim, can he really ‘confess that Yeshua has come in the flesh’ in a Torah-consistent way if he does not follow Yeshua’s teachings in the ordinary affairs of daily life? Yeshua would say that while such a man or woman may be able to draw a crowd, increase attendance, coax large offerings, perform what appear to be signs and wonders, and generally ‘wow’ the world, he or she is ‘least in the kingdom of heaven’.

Yeshua, you see, is the *Living Torah*. His message and Torah’s message are identical. He is *Torah in the flesh*. So ... *is Torah the standard by which you have been evaluating spiritual leadership?* Are you *re’eh-ing*? Or are you looking at teachers, teaching and religion through Heaven’s eyes? Are you making decisions about what teaching you want to align yourself with solely on the basis of natural vision and with the limited perspective offered by ‘eyes on the ground’.

The sweet Voice of the Holy One which we *sh'ma* is the only trustworthy standard.
And the Torah He has given us to *re'eh* is the only trustworthy plumb line.
Everything else is destined to be burned up as wood, hay, and stubble.

Shavua Tov!
The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week of Parsha Re'eh
Petition No. 1, Da'at, the Prayer for Knowledge

Atah chanen l'adam da-at
You graciously give man understanding

u'm'lamed l'enosh binah
and teach mortal men wisdom

Chaneinu mayiteicha da'at, binah v'haskel
Generously endow us with Your understanding, wisdom, and discernment

Baruch Atah Adonai, chanen ha-da'at
Blessed are You, O Holy One, Who gives understanding