

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Re'eh:** **Deuteronomy 12:28 - 13:18**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 54:13-15**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I John 4:2-3**

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared ...

[Deuteronomy 12:30a]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 112:4-8;

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

Sh'mor v'shamata et kol-ha-devarim ha-eleh asher anochi metzaveika – Cherish and diligently prioritize flowing in rhythm with [i.e. sh'mar] all these things/words with which I enjoin you... *l'ma'an yitav lecha ulevaneicha achareicha ad-olam* - so that it will go well/be goodness with/for you and with/for your sons after in the time to come **Deuteronomy 12:28a.**

What do you think it means for life to 'go well' for you? And what, on the other hand, do you think the opposite situation – i.e. life NOT 'going well' for you - would look and feel like? What would be the tell-tale signs, either way? In other words, what is your vision for a 'well-lived life'? What is your definition of that phrase? Similarly, how do you define a poorly lived, wasted, or inferior life? Perhaps we should ask these questions another way: if you love your children, what kind of life, with what kind of focus and what kind of impact on the world, do you want them to live? And what kind of life do you most definitely not want them to live?

L.L.A.P. – i.e. "Live Long and Prosper!"

Moshe has walked this planet for 120 years, and over the course of those years he has learned a thing or two about what brings quality of life ... and, conversely what hinders it.. Particularly since his call at the thorn bush he has seen the 'for better' delights of covenant life and the 'for worse' repercussions of breach of covenant. He has experienced both 'for richer' experiences and 'for poorer' ones. He is well acquainted with life's perils and pitfalls; but he is also aware of its tremendous possibilities. He wants us to know what he now knows - that each of us has to choose, daily, and moment-by-moment, challenge to our shalom by challenge to our shalom, whether we want to live a well-lived life, good and true, or are content to let our life crash and burn in a firestorm of lust, folly, pseudo-intellect, hyper-emotion, and self-will. He wants us to know that the Holy One has provided us a roadmap, an instruction manual, a faithful and true Mentor/Example,

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and all the inspiration, motivation, and empowerment we will ever need. Each of us, however, must decide if we will or will not take advantage of those things. He wants us to know that if we choose instead to just do what ‘feels’ good to our flesh, or what seems right to our pseudo-intellect, or what is accepted and normal in the culture in which we live and trade, we will usually still live; we will just tend not to live *well*. He wants us to know that if we want abundant, fruitful, meaningful life, we have to sign up for the Holy One’s Torah Lifestyle Plan – and have to pass on the fleshly temptations and pseudo-intellectual mind-games of the *whatever-happens-to-be-trending today* lifestyle plan of the nations around us. We can choose to walk in and model to the world the Holy One’s shalom, joy, hope, gentleness, vision, wisdom, patience, and self-discipline – or we can choose to pollute the world with the dark energy of self-will, propaganda, paranoia, perversion, negative emotion, foolish idealism, humanistic ideology, and half-baked opinion. We can choose to walk in calm, reverent, faith-filled fear of Heaven – or we can choose to love the things and fleeting fleshly pleasures of this world. We can choose to treat our fellow man with love, kindness, compassion and forgiveness – or we can choose to walk in accusation, judgmentalism, offense, outrage, condemnation, sarcasm, and cynicism. We can choose to walk humbly with the Creator of the Universe, responsibly steward His beautiful but delicate Creation, and selflessly serve our fellow man – or we can choose to waste away our days and ruin our health and relationships in self-indulgence, sensuality, sentimentality, sexuality, social climbing, and pseudo-intelligence. These are our choices.

Two Very Different Pathways – For Two Very Different Destinies

The pathways that lead to these different lifestyles are diverging before our eyes. But what challenges to our choice wait for us along the path? The first challenge for which our prophet-turned-rabbi feels constrained to prepare us is the challenge of *pagan models* of religion. These models will have a seductive charm. Indeed, they are infused with to thirteen powerful enticements.

[1] The prominent *display of sentimentality-arousing religious symbols and images*;

[2] Promoting what they call ‘*membership*’ in an organization/institution promising fellowship, favor, and privileges that will be denied to those whose names are not on the organization/institution’s membership list;

[3] Requiring – or at least strongly encouraging - *attendance of meetings at the organization/institution’s headquarters*;

[4] Requiring – or at least strongly encouraging - *participation in a set of Institutionally-defined sacraments*;

[5] Promotion of a *local clergy class* who dominates the laity by claiming:
[a] *special levels of revelation and holiness* allowing them to

administer whatever sacraments they choose to require; and
[b] a right to be revered and obeyed as 'spiritual authority' and/or as
the local group's self-proclaimed 'covering';

[6] *Separating parents from their children during the meetings;*

[7] *Discouraging – if not prohibiting - any faith exercise by the laity off the premises, outside the auspices, and/or without the sanction of the organization's official leadership;*

[8] *Highly prioritizing the donation of money, especially by talking about it in every meeting, publicly honoring those who donate, and subtly shaming those who do not;*

[9] *Existing to perpetuate a regular schedule of weekly meetings each of which is specifically geared to excite, entertain, and move people to:*

[a] *become dependent on the meetings;*

[b] *become emotionally attached to the buildings, the images, and the clergy; and*

[c] *donate more money;*

[10] *Employment of emotionally manipulative music, dance, drama, and rhetoric – sometimes called 'hype'; and*

[11] *Focusing primarily on form and formula rather than substance;*

[12] *Focusing on intellectual beliefs rather than real-time behaviors;*

[13] *Hijacking popular pagan holidays, infusing them with religious sentiment, and incorporating the emotionally charged observance of them into the programs of the local worship center's schedule.*

Knowing the seductive power of such an organizational/institutional insider/outsider, symbol/sacrament/superstition/sentiment approach to God-man and man-to-man relations, Moshe warns us to steer clear of indulging, much less venerating, such sinister but seductive substitutions for Covenantal spirituality. He warns us:

Hishamer lecha pen-tinakesh achareihem

Take heed to yourself that you are not seduced into following them/their practices,

acharei hishamdam mipaneicha

after they are laid waste before you,

ufen-tidrosh l'eloheihem

and that you do not tread after/follow (or study/become familiar with) the ways of their gods

lemor eichah ya'avdu ha-goyim ha-eleh et-eloheihem

saying 'How these peoples serve their gods!'

v'e'eseh-ken gam-ani

Therefore I will [serve my God] in such ways also!

[Deuteronomy 12:30]

The world does not need a new, slightly less perverse, form of paganism. It has far too many of those already. What the world needs is a radical model of righteousness – one that works in real people, in real places, in real time to make

this world, as well as the next, a better place.

***Kingdom Infrastructure 101:
A City With Foundations, Whose Builder and Maker is God***

The over-riding theme of parsha *Re'eh* is “*Up to Jerusalem!*” Ah, Beautiful Jerusalem – the City of our Great King! The delight of the Holy One our God is in her. She is our *chief joy* – and our *brightest hope*. She is at the epicenter of our Bridegroom-King’s Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation. We are to always pray for her *shalom*. Forever young, forever old - may our hearts sing her songs of glory forever! The return of the Bridegroom-King to our planet can occur nowhere else. It is on her hill that He will ascend to His Throne. It is from her housetops and hilltops that His Words will be published to the farthest reaches of the world. Her streets are the pathways the Holy One has established for the prodigals and pilgrims of all nations to come to Him. She is the eternal capital of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Her sanctuary is the assigned mustering place for all the Exiles of Yehudah and Efrayim to regather. She is where all the nations and peoples of the earth will one day be called to stand for judgment. She is the only place on earth He has promised to defend, deliver *it*, pass over, and preserve forever. *May those who love you prosper, Beautiful City! May shalom be ever within your walls! May prosperity be ever within your palaces! For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, “May Shalom be within you.” Because of the house of the Holy One our God I will always seek your good.*”²

Are you catching the Bridegroom-King’s excitement about the city from which Melki-Tzedek, David, and Sh’lomo reigned? When you think of Jerusalem, do you sigh and whisper: *ahh, home?* Well, if you do, that’s because at some level of your being you have begun to realize that *there is something really big going on* – and that the city of Jerusalem is at the very heart of it.

There is Something Really Big Going On Relative to Jerusalem!

Behold, Moshe says - there is *something really big going on!* There is something bigger going on than playing the avoidance game with Fallen Creation’s *thorns and thistles*. There is something bigger going on than indulging *appetites, feeding cravings, bolstering opinions*, and *nursing offenses* picked up in the *thistle patches of life*. There is something bigger going on than our *flesh’s* selfish interest in *comfort, security, and convenience*. There is something far bigger going on than our local city or town’s frame of reference or our local worship center’s teaching and ministry program. There is something bigger going on than either the familiar traditions of our fathers or the fads and fashions embraced by our generation. There is something bigger going on than the customs and values and philosophical,

² See Psalm 122:6-9.

political and economic ebbs and flows of the cultural milieu in which we live. There is something bigger going on than the organizations we have chosen to join, the meetings we have elected to attend, and the ministry activities we have taken it upon ourselves to participate in. There is *something much, much bigger* going on.

Do you have the heart for the ‘something bigger’ to which you are called? Do you have the *time* for it? Do you have the *passion* for it? Do you even have the *vision* for it?

What is this ‘something bigger’ that is going on, you ask? The something bigger that is going on is *the strategic plan of Heaven for our world, our times, our households, and our lives*. The ‘something bigger’ with which the Holy One wants us to get on board is Heaven’s invasion of Earth – one real time conversation and interaction at a time. The ‘something bigger’ that is going on is our Bridegroom-King’s plan to co-labor with us, and our children, and our children’s children, *to gradually, patiently, inexorably bring about the Redemption of His Creation – and to let us partner with Him in doing it!*

Once we come to the realization that *something bigger really is going on*, the question which must be answered by each of us is whether what we are doing in our little corner of the world is in tune with the heartbeat and times and seasons of that Divine Strategic Plan – or is working at cross-purposes with what the Holy One is doing. In other words, are we wise in our own myopic eyes, acting solely of out of our own self-interested sense of what is ‘right’ or ‘expedient’ – or are we content to be His Hands extended, living in real-time communication with Him, moving only in response to impulses sent usward from His Brilliant Mind? To answer these questions, periodically we simply must go *up to Jerusalem* and reconnect with the earth’s primary portal of Heavenly revelation. After all, Jerusalem is *the epicenter of Divine Plan for the Redemption of Creation*³. The City of the Great King is our appointed ‘*rallying place*’ for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Climbing the Mountains of Jerusalem and Getting a Better Perspective on Our Lives and Times

The main challenge that comes with the *Up to Jerusalem* theme is to actually shake off the tyranny of the seemingly urgent affairs of daily living, as well as our self-centered, myopic attitudes and approaches to life. If we are to *lift up our eyes to the hills* where Melki-Tzedek and David and Yeshua released world-changing

³ This is borne out by such Scriptural passages as **Psalm 147:2-15; Jeremiah 3:17; Joel 2:32 and 3:16; Micah 4:2; Zechariah chapters 8, 12, 13, and 14; Matthew 5:35; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8, and Revelation chapter 21.**

revelation, and shift our focus to *higher things*, and *more excellent ways*, we need to learn how to press through the fog of fear, worry, the compulsion to feel in control, anger, offense, complaint, competition, self-consciousness, materialism and moralization about what other men are doing. If we are to find the place where the King is moving, and throw our passion and energy and resources into what the King is doing, we have to eyes to see it.

To meet and overcome *the challenge of the overwhelming ordinary* we need a *new frame of reference*, a *new attitude*, and a *new sense of spiritual reality*. Things that seem *familiar* and *comfortable* need to be re-evaluated. Things that we - in ignorance or in ambivalence - *tolerated* in the past despite their negative influence on our lives need to be cast off like a worn-out pair of shoes. There is no way we can take such things with us on the steep climb up to Jerusalem.

***A Clearly and Radically Distinguishable People –
It's All Part of the Plan!***

Up until the aliyah we read yesterday Moshe's second 'farewell' speech on the plains of Moav had consisted primarily of describing with passion and beauty the "*sh'ma lifestyle*" which is to characterize the Holy One's people. He challenged us in general terms to be *Bridal* in orientation - to *live as 'responders'* to the Holy voice, to maintain *a sense of reverent awe* of the Divine Bridegroom, to *listen intently for, receive with joy, and meditate on and teach our children His every word*, to *love Him with all our hearts, souls and strength*, and to *perennially commemorate and recount His wondrous deeds of deliverance*. In yesterday's aliyah however Moshe stepped up the challenge – as he began to paint for us a picture of specifically what kind of things the *sh'ma* lifestyle is to LOOK LIKE in *real life* and *real time*. The prophet began in yesterday's aliyah to transition our thinking from *the general* to *the specific*, from *inner matters of the heart* to *physical, tangible actions* visible to, and objectively measurable by, everyone.

The essence of what Moshe started telling us in yesterday's aliyah is that the *sh'ma* lifestyle to which we are called is going to cause us to look/present/adorn ourselves/carry ourselves differently from the rest of the world - in almost every conceivable way. Oh we will still have one head, two arms and legs, hands, feet, eyes, ears and noses like everyone else on the planet it is true – but just about *everything else about us will bear the Holy One's distinctive MARK*. Distinctiveness, it seems, is what the journey '*up to Jerusalem*' is all about.

Moshe shocked some of us in yesterday's aliyah by revealing that for *sh'ma* people the most basic spiritual activity – *i.e. worship* – will be so drastically different from the pattern set by the rest of the world that when people come into our villages they

will be dumbfounded. We learned that while this will occur in part because of what outside observers *see us doing - ordinary fathers and mothers living, modeling and teaching the Torah to each other and to their children in every home*. But the plan of the Holy One is that people who come to where we live will also be dumbfounded because of something they do *not* see us doing. If we follow Moshe's inspired instructions, you see, outside observers will *not* see us building in the cities and villages in which we live in Eretz Yisrael any shrines, temples, or altars of sacrifice. Our holy and zealous lifestyles, the cohesiveness of our families, the subject matter of our conversations as we walk along the road, and the obvious dedication of our houses to 'Heaven's Kingdom' are supposed to testify of our relationship with the King – not the other stuff.

We Can Try to Pretend We Are Like Everyone Else – Or We Can Be Who Our Bridegroom-King Redeemed us to Be

Some might think it strange that the only “religious” activity in which Moshe tells us to engage in our villages and towns is for *ordinary moms and dads to quietly worship the Holy One in their homes and as they go about their daily lives, modeling for their own children the mitzvot and ways of the Holy One*. Moshe, however, had seen firsthand the disaster that focusing on local worship centers instead of homes and families had caused in Egypt, in Midyan, and at *Ba'al-Peor*. Moshe was present at Sinai. He remembered clearly that the Holy One never said ‘*You shall honor your pastor/ rabbi/priest/clergyman*’. Instead He said, ‘***You will honor your father and mother***’. Exodus 20:12. Moshe knew that the Holy One had never said – and would never say - *Every Sabbath day you are to leave your homes and participate in public worship services in community buildings that require musicians and singers and clergymen and nursery workers to work so you can feel like you fulfilled your religious duty*. He knew the Holy One had said instead: ***You will remember the Sabbath, and carefully guard its holiness, and on it you will do no work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates***. Exodus 20:8-10.

How Lovely Are Your Tents, O Ya'akov!

What Moshe is prophetically downloading is indeed a highly *novel* – make that *revolutionary* – idea! If what he is saying is right, the two centers of gravity of our relationship with the Holy One - unlike the relationship of other peoples to their ‘gods’ - are designed to be 1. *our home* [not some local worship center in our community], and 2. the one City, from all our tribes, where the Holy One shall place His Name [i.e. Jerusalem]. Our spiritual training is, unlike that of other peoples, not designed to be dependent upon the work of a clergy-class. Unlike the *nature-based spirituality* of other people groups, our *Heaven-based spirituality* is *not* best explored, developed, or propagated by attendance at local religious ‘services’. But without a

local altar at which to ‘worship’, present tithes, and celebrate festivals; without a clergy-class to put on pedestals; and without regular public religious services in our communities to attend ... well, without these things how on earth [I hear some people saying] are we supposed to ‘worship’? Moshe has covered that clearly. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Moshe told us how it was to be for us – every man and woman amongst us is to focus his energy on learning the Holy One’s words and ways for himself, meditating upon them, and teaching them to his children - not spending untold hours of time and energy at some local religious shrine.

You see, Dear Reader, the loveliness with which the Holy One our Bridegroom has adorned us is not displayed most effectively in the hallowed halls of religious institutions. It is instead most stunning when it is displayed *in our dwelling places*. The prophet did not declare ‘*how lovely are your synagogues, or how lovely are your cathedrals*’; he declared ‘*how lovely are your tents!*’ With eyes that *re’eh* it becomes perfectly clear – if the *sh’ma*-lifestyle is not real and vibrant in our homes and most vulnerable family relationships, it is simply not real and vibrant at all. Putting on a good show for each other a few hours a week behind stain-glass windows merely allows us to feel good about ourselves while we fail to do anything meaningful within the primary spheres of influence the Holy One gave us to deposit His Footprint. Those primary spheres of influence are the *home*, the *workplace*, the *marketplace*, and all the *paths, highways and byways* that lead us to and from the above. That is why Moshe taught us that the *mitzvot* of Torah and the wonderful works of the Holy One are to be constantly on *everyone’s* lips, a part of every conversation *when people sit at home*, when they *walk by the way*, when they *lie down*, and when they *rise up*. That is why Moshe taught us we need – and owe it to ourselves and our families - to *bless the Holy One after every meal*, both for the *food* we just ate and for the land He has given us which allows us to participate in the production of food. That is why Moshe taught that everyone in our community is to know and have a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week, living, breathing relationship with the Holy One - and therefore have no dependence upon *organized religion*. There is, after all, no way to carry the heavy weight of ‘organized religion’ up the steep grade of the roads that lead ‘*up to Jerusalem*’.

Instead of the “local altar” system used by the Kena’ani and other peoples of the earth to worship their “gods” Moshe has taught that the Holy One’s people are to all go to *one central location* (eventually, the Holy City, Jerusalem) where the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven said He would “place His Name”. This gathering at ‘one central location’ was to be the practice of the Holy One’s people not only when making *korbanot* (approaching the Holy One through substitutionary atonement picturing

Messiah's sacrificial death)⁴, but also when assembling together according to a prescribed schedule of Divine Appointments [the “Feasts” set forth in Leviticus 23] to “rejoice before the Holy One” with their families and to participate as anointed actors in the Divine Drama of His Plan of Redemption for mankind⁵. Now that is indeed a *radical* plan, Moshe! There is no other word for it.

***Worshipping/Serving the Holy One in His Prescribed Way -
A Challenge ... and a Warning!***
[Deuteronomy 12:28-32]

Today we will conclude our study of the radically different worship lifestyle to which the Holy One has called us. We will move on to some related subjects – all having to do with how we are to think, look, speak, act, and be- different from all other peoples on earth. Today's aliyah begins with the Holy One [through Moshe] instructing us, like the loving Bridegroom He is, one more time, that *we are not to be a people whose worship practices imitate those of pagan nations*. Chapter 12 ends with this reminder that *Torah – and it alone - is to be our worship guide*. Here is the challenge the Holy One, through His prophet Moshe, delivers to us:

Sh'mor v'shamata

Observe [Hebrew, sh'mar⁶] and hear/be responsive to [Hebrew, sh'ma⁷]

et kol-ha-devarim ha-eleh asher anochi metzaveika

all these words with which I enjoin you,

l'ma'an yitav lecha

that it may go well/be tov with you,

⁴ The *korban* concept of approaching the Holy One through a surrogate, who dies in place of the worshipper, that the worshipper may go free, is discussed in Leviticus 1-5. For a refresher on this subject, one might wish to re-read Monday's Study from of parsha *Vayikra*.

⁵ The ‘appointed days’ of the Holy One are discussed in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29.

⁶ The word English Bibles translate as “keep” /“observe” is Strong's Hebrew word #8104, *shin, mem, resh, sh'mar*, pronounced *shaw-mar'*. This verb root means to *treasure, to cherish and hold dear, to diligently defend, to guard, to keep watch over, to protect, and to keep safe*. The first Biblical usage is illustrative, as always. In Genesis 2 we are told: *And the Holy One God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep [i.e. sh'mar] it. [Genesis 2:15]*

⁷ The Hebrew word English Bibles translate as “hear” is *sh'ma – shin, mem, ayin*, Strong's Hebrew word #8085, sometimes translated “*he listens*”, sometimes “*he hears*”, and sometimes “*he obeys*”. The first usage is in Genesis 3:8, where we are told of Adam and Chava, after the Fall: *And they heard [sh'ma] the voice of the Holy One God walking in the garden [in the cool of the day]* To *sh'ma* means to adopt as your lifestyle the *listening ear*, that hangs on every Word spoken by the Divine Bridegroom as a drowning man hangs on a lifeline when being rescued. It means to surrender one's independence from the Holy One. It means to give up trying to win one's salvation or determine what is right for oneself. It means to accept a role as a Bride, and be a *responder*, rather than an initiator, in God-man interactions. It means to trust in the Holy One, and do *only what He says to do, only when and only where and only how* He says to do it. It means to *go only where He says go, to eat only what He says to eat, and stay where He says stay* – whether you understand it [or like it] or not. It means *letting Him be the stronger partner in the covenant relationship*.

ul'vaneicha achareicha ad-olam
and with your children after you forever,

ki ta'aseh hatov
for this is to do [Hebrew, asah⁸] that which is good [Hebrew, tov]

v'hayashar b'eynei Adonai Eloheicha
and which is right [Hebrew, yashar] in the eyes of the Holy One your God.
[Deuteronomy 12:28]

Note that Moshe's focus is that "*it may go well with you and with your children after you forever*". He is a prophet. He therefore sees – and thinks – trans-generationally. He is concerned, as he relates to us the Holy One's instructions about worship, that not only *our future, but also our children's future – and the future of their children, forever – hang in the balance*. If we don't get this basic issue 'right', the prophet is warning us, we will be *endangering our children*.

What does Moshe say is the key to the future wellbeing of our children, and their children? It is nothing short of *making of the instructions for living he is giving us on the plains of Moav an eternal constitution by which we are to live*. In case you still have questions in your mind how serious this issue is, the Spirit of the Holy One inspires Moshe follow up the challenge of a new lifestyle of worship in an 'up to Jerusalem' mindset with what sounds to me like a DIRE WARNING. He says:

Hishamer lecha ... pen-tinakesh
take heed ... do not be ensnared ...

ufen-tidrosh l'eloheihem l'emor
do not inquire after their gods, saying,

eichah ya'avdu ha-goyim ha-eleh et-eloheihem v'e'eseh-ken gam-ani
'How do these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise'.

Lo-ta'aseh chen l'Adonai Eloheicha
You are not to do such things unto the Holy One your God!
[Deuteronomy 12:29-31(a)]

Moshe then tells us WHY the Holy One does not want us to embrace the local worship center model employed by the rest of the world and all organizational religions. It is *because* that system always eventually results in *the absolute opposite of the holy and family-centered lifestyle the Holy One wants for His people*:

ki chol-toavat Adonai asher sane
... for every abomination to the Holy One, which He hates/rejects;

⁸ The Hebrew verb English Bibles translate as 'do' is *asah*. It means to *interact with raw materials creatively, the way a potter interacts with clay, working with it, molding it and forming it, until it gradually becomes something useful, valuable, and beautiful*. It means to *take something lifeless and bring it to life, or to take something inactive and make it active*.

asu l'eloheihem

they have committed unto their gods;

ki gam et-b'neihem v'et-b'noteihem yisreifu va'esh l'eloheihem

for also their sons and their daughters are burned in fire unto their gods.

[Deuteronomy 12:31]

Abominations to the Holy One? Burning sons and daughters in 'the fire' unto false gods? That's BAD STUFF! It appears our children – and our children's children – may just be in danger indeed. But why? What is it that is so dangerous – to an 'up to Jerusalem' minded people, at least - about the local worship center, local altar, local priesthood modalities of worship followed by virtually all the other religions of the world? Moshe will tell us. But we may not like what we hear.

I Repeat: Beware of 'Spiritual Arithmetic'!

Moshe is not one to mince words. He is *a prophet* of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov. He is not afraid to step on toes. He therefore ends his passionate section on the controversial subject of worship with these words:

Et kol-ha-d'var asher anochi metzaveh etchem

Whatever thing I instruct you,

oto tishmeiru la'asot

that observe [Hebrew, sh'mar] and that do [Hebrew, asah]:

lo-tosef alav v'lo tigra mimeinu

do not add anything thereto nor take anything away therefrom.

[Deuteronomy 13:1]

The Divine Bridegroom's instructions regarding how we are to relate to and serve and worship Him are pretty clear. We are to be *family-centered* and *home-focused*, concentrating our spiritual energies on *sh'ma*-ing the Holy One and *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing His *mitzvot*. We are to regularly commemorate with our families the events of our redemption, in connection with God-ordained festivals.

Now Moshe wants one other thing to be clear - we are not to add to His instructions – or take away from them. What does this mean? Could it possibly mean that we are not, for instance, to build onto the instructions of Torah a religious system of 'holy places' and 'holy men' and after the pattern of other nations? Could it possibly mean that we are not to add new 'holy days' for religious observance? Could it mean that we are likewise not to subtract from the Holy One's instructions by delegating to clergymen or tax-exempt organizations the responsibility to pursue intimacy with the Holy One and to teach us or our children the Ways of the Bridegroom-King? Could it possibly mean that we are not to change His Divine definitions of what is and is not 'food', when His 'Sabbath' occurs, etc.? Could it mean that we are not to delegate to the government and

‘charitable foundations’ the task of encouraging and assisting the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the sojourner that the Holy One brings within our sphere of influence? Could it be that to add to or subtract from the Torah of the Holy One in ways such as those mentioned above is to imply that we know better than the Holy One what should be done? Could it be that insistence on doing things in a way that seems right to us – no matter whether His Torah tells us to or not – constitutes a declaration that we think *His way* is less than perfect, and that *our way* is better? Ah, perhaps that is it. Perhaps that is why, as Moshe pointed out in the opening verse of today’s aliyah, whether or not it “*goes well with us and our children*” as we interact with others and the channels they have developed for exercising their spiritual passion depends upon whether we *sh’ma* the “regulations” (the Hebrew is *d’varim*, meaning words, teachings, prophetic announcements) of the Torah - and carry out those teachings by “*doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Holy One your God.*”

That leads us to our next – and closely related – subject – the subject of the *false prophet!*

The Holy One’s Instructions Concerning ‘False Prophets’

[Deuteronomy 13:1-18]

As stated in Deuteronomy 6 and 11 and in Genesis 18:19, by the Holy One’s design the *primary interaction those in covenant with the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven are to have with Him* is in our homes and families as we go about our normal activities of life - as we *lie down* and *rise up*, and as we *sit in our homes*, and as we *walk by the way*. On certain prescribed occasions during the year, as set out in Torah, however, our circle is to widen, and our passion to interact with the Holy One is to be pursued in community - within the guidelines of the Torah. In so directing, the Holy One knew that every time our circles widened - and sometimes even in our homes and daily lives - we would be exposed to people whose religious thoughts and practices, experiences and expressions, differed from our own. *How would we know what “new” religious teaching and practice to accept and emulate, and what to lovingly but firmly reject?* That is the subject of the second part of today’s aliyah.

In part II of today’s aliyah Moshe warns the Redeemed that there will always be people who will preach and teach *otherwise* – other than Torah. There will be people, He warns, who *add to* and who *subtract from* the Torah. There will be people, He cautions, who have great charisma and apparent “anointing” - even power to do signs and wonders - who will be allowed by the Holy One to engage in all kinds of *religious activities* which will attract many of God’s people. Where will these people proliferate – and gain followings? In local worship centers. So Moshe tells us, concerning them, *when one arises among you a prophet or a*

dreamer of dreams ...

v'natan eleicha ot o mofet

And he presents you with a sign or miracle

Uva ha-ot v'ha-mofet asher-diber eleicha l'emor

If on the basis of that sign or miracle he says to you,

neleichah acharei elohim acherim

'Let us follow a different god,

asher lo-yedatam v'na'ovdem

pursue knowledge of it, and serve it.'

Lo tish'ma el-divrei ha-navi hahu

Do not sh'ma the utterances of that prophet

o el-cholem ha-chalom hahu

or to the dreams of that dreamer.

[Deuteronomy 13:3-4(a)]

Moshe then explains why the Holy One even allows false prophets to come into the spheres of influence of even His Beloved, saying:

ki menaseh Adonai Eloheichem etchem

The Holy One your God is testing you

l'da'at ha-yishchem ohavim et-Adonai Eloheichem

to know if you truly love the Holy One your God

b'chol-levavchem uv'chol-nafsheichem

with all your heart and all your soul.

[Deuteronomy 13:4(b)]

In other words the whole 'false prophet' issue Torah says we are ordained to face is directly related to Deuteronomy 6:4 – where the Holy One [through Moshe] instructed/empowered us to love the Bridegroom of Heaven with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our might. The Holy One apparently wanted us to take that instruction/empowerment *very, very seriously*. He knew our lives – and our mission, purpose, and destiny as His chosen people to be a 'light to the gentiles' – depended upon it. The Holy One therefore established a '*tough love*' procedure to periodically check us – and enable us to check ourselves - as to how our love of/for Him was maturing. What is the '*tough love*' procedure He chose? He would actually allow a *false prophet* to arise in our midst – sort of like how He allowed the serpent to enter the Garden, perhaps - and would allow that false prophet to *wow* us with his charisma and to impress us with obvious spiritual giftings.

What the Holy One expects of us when faced with this challenge is to look *through* the charisma, *through* the giftings, *through* the signs and wonders, *to* the essence of the message the false prophet proclaims. If the prophet's message was other

than the message of the Torah He expects us to *lo sh'ma* the prophet, to ignore his signs and wonders, and to cling even harder to the Holy One our God. Moshe explains it thusly:

Acharei Adonai Eloheichem teleichu

Follow after the Holy One your God

v'oto tira'u v'et-mitzvotav tish'moru

Continue to revere Him, and to treasure and carefully guard His life-instructions;

Uv'kolo tish'ma'u v'oto ta'avodu

In all things sh'ma Him and serve Him,

uvo tidbakun

and cleave/cling to Him.

V'ha-navi hahu o cholem ha-chalom

And that prophet or dreamer

hahu yumat ki diber-sarah al-Adonai Eloheichem

will die for having spoken rebelliously against the Holy One your God

ha-motzi etchem m'eret Mitzrayim

who brought you out of Egypt

v'ha-podeicha mibeyt avadim

and liberated you from the place of slavery.

L'ha-dichacha min-ha-derech

He was trying to make you leave the path

asher tziveicha Adonai Eloheicha lalechet bah

in which the Holy One your God is enjoining you to walk,

uvi'arta ha-ra mikirbeicha

and you must ba'ar [i.e. gather up and cast out] such evil from your midst.

[Deuteronomy 13:4(b)-6]

In today's aliyah the Torah - and particularly the *Sh'ma* - is set forth as *the one eternal standard by which every seemingly spiritual thing* (especially any prophecy or teaching, in particular, but necessarily, because of context, including any modality or pattern of worship of the Holy One) *is to be judged*, and against which it is to be tested and tried. In His great love for us the Holy One has given us this unfailing, eternal "litmus test" to judge everything that appears "spiritual" or "religious". Man has been given "free will", and in order to make a free choice must be given a standard by which to judge which choices are '*the way of life, health, and shalom*' and which are '*the way of corruption, calamity and perversion.*' By giving us the Torah (indeed, writing it on our hearts) the Holy One has provided *the eternal standard we need* and has thereby enabled us (if we *sh'ma*) to *discern between spiritual truth on the one hand and every form of deception and error on the other hand*. Hence if anyone comes preaching in the name of a prophet that *has done away with the*

Torah of the Holy One, or even added to or subtracted from it, we are to know beyond a shadow of doubt, from that one fact alone, that the prophet in question is a *false prophet*, and are to *disbelieve everything he says* and *distance ourselves from him*.

Similarly, if a prophet claims that a messianic figure has come who has done away with, or has added to or has subtracted from, the Torah, or that we are now free to do the same, we are to know that the messianic figure that the prophet proclaims is a *false 'messiah'*. The real Messiah of the Holy One will not – and did not – do such things. The real Messiah will, by definition, turn our hearts, minds, and wills to the Torah, will teach us the Torah in all its fullness, and will empower us to walk in it. It can be no other way.

In other words, Hebrew people are right to flatly reject any purported messiah who is presented as someone who has done away with the Torah, replaced it, or even added to/subtracted from it. Historically it is a false prophet – one which [so it was said] *did away with*, or at the very least *added to* and *subtracted from*, the Torah - that organized Christianity has tried to push on the world. But such a 'Jesus' *cannot be*, and *is not*, the messiah promised in the TaNaKh. Such a character as organized Christianity hawks should be – and by and large has been - flatly rejected, by Jew and Gentile alike. The Holy One who led Avraham and Moshe would have to be a liar for such a person to be the Messiah. Moreover, a sinless Hebrew son simply cannot – would never - dishonor his father and drawing attention away to himself by abolishing or rendering obsolete and/or ineffectual the precious, wise words His Father's mouth has spoken, according to which His Father has committed Himself to the world in covenant forever. That kind of self-promoting approach would be the way of an Absalom, not the way of a Messiah. Heaven forbid! Never, ever accept or embrace such a caricature.

But Wait – There is GOOD NEWS!

There is good news, however. The good news is that *there is a real Messiah* – a Messiah who honors His Father in all things, is Hebrew and Torah observant through and through, and who is therefore wise, substantive, life-changing, and world-transforming. In the face of the real Messiah, the false image promoted by organized Christianity of an English-speaking character who did away with Torah and replaced it with just a couple of very vague new instructions – pales in comparison. Such a caricature is, in comparison to the real Messiah, shown very clearly to be a *mirage*, a sentimental figment of some human being's perverse anti-Semitic, lawless, golden calf-influenced imagination. The real Messiah was – *is* – and will *always remain* - a *Hebrew*, through and through. All his friends and associates were Hebrews. All of them spoke Hebrew. All of them knew by heart –

and joyfully embraced and followed - the life instructions the Holy One has given mankind during the era of the Exodus and Conquest in the form of the Torah. The real Messiah was a man of the tribe of Y'hudah, son of Ya'akov/Yisrael. His native language was Hebrew. See Acts 26:14. His birthplace was a Hebrew village, located in the tribal allotment of his Hebrew ancestry. His childhood took place primarily in a village just a few miles North of His birthplace, in a region of the land promised to Avraham and his descendants forever, known to Hebrews as the *Galil*. The real Messiah never once attended went to a Christian church service in His life, and never once suggested that anyone attend, become a member of, or support one. He never called anyone by the title 'pastor' or 'apostle' or 'bishop' or 'elder' or 'usher'.

The real Messiah taught that the greatest commandment was exactly what Moshe had said it was: '*Sh'ma Yisrael, the Holy One your God, the Holy One is Echad.*' Mark 12:29. The real Messiah never once ate – or will ever eat anything Torah declares to be 'tamei'. The real Messiah never once celebrated – or told anyone to celebrate - Advent, Lent, Christmas or Easter, 'Fat Tuesday', 'Ash Wednesday' 'Maundy Thursday' or 'Good Friday'. Indeed, if you suggested in their hearing that those holidays by that name or on those days had anything whatever to do with Him or with the Kingdom of Heaven, the Disciples of the real Messiah would look at you like you needed immediate deliverance from an unclean spirit.

The real Yeshua of Natzret was and will always continue to be Torah-observant through and through. His Torah observance was not only important to Him from His birth to His death on the execution stake, but continued to be important to Him from His death to His resurrection and from His resurrection to His ascension. It continues to be important to Him today. The real Yeshua continues to be Torah observant even today as He intercedes for us in Heaven. And He will, to the surprise of many, not only continue to be Torah-observant when He returns to earth and establishes His kingdom, but will direct that Torah be taught to and followed by all tribes, tongues and nations of earth while He sits enthroned in Jerusalem⁹. The real Yeshua will in fact *establish the Torah as the constitution of His Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2*. The real Yeshua was, is, and will always be a teacher of Torah *par excellence*. The real Yeshua constantly called, calls, and will forever call people to walk out the Torah in every aspect of life, after the manner He demonstrated while on earth human beings are designed to live out the Torah in the ordinary affairs of ordinary life. The real Yeshua taught, teaches, and will teach until His Messianic Kingdom ends that He did not come to *do away with* the Torah but to *make it full and meaningful again* – to take it out of

⁹ See Isaiah 2:1-4, Zechariah 8 and 14.

the realm of theoretical, to which it had largely been relegated by legalistic fences built around the Torah, into the world of *practical application*. **Matthew 5:17-19.**

Questions For Today's Study

1. Read Deuteronomy 12:29-31. Then reread Deuteronomy 12:1-4.

[A] What things should one who is seeking to worship the One True God do?

[B] What things should one who is seeking to worship the One True God not do? Why do you think this is so?

2. Why do you think the Holy One permits us to be exposed to false teachers, false doctrines, false prophets, false prophecies, and false worship modalities?

3. When a new prophet or teacher comes around, what *six things* does Deuteronomy 13:4 tell us we should do before we decide whether the things being prophesied or taught by this person are of God or are not?

4. Deuteronomy 13:5-15 called for the Redeemed Community to engage in a legal process that would impose the death penalty on different people [and groups of people] for a certain sin.

[A] What was this sin and why was it so serious?

[B] What sins was Yeshua accused of? Was the sin mentioned in Deut. 13 one of those sins?

5. The Haftarah verses today - addressed to Jerusalem, the City of public worship - beautifully portray the effect of living the *Sh'ma lifestyle* and public worship as the Holy One decreed in the life of one who hears and obeys the Torah: ***All your sons will be taught by the Holy One, and great will be your children's shalom.***

[A] Read Isaiah 54:13. Then read John 6:45, where Yeshua quoted this verse in one of His sermons. What do you think Isaiah 54:13 means?

[B] According to Isaiah 54:13, who is really teaching you the Torah?

[C] If you learn about the Holy One through the Torah (as the Holy One intended), to whom will that lead you? [According to Yeshua's words in John 6:45].

6. The B'rit Chadasha reading for today is I John 4:2:

***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.***

Yochanan [John] suggests a way in which a person can tell/discern whether the spirit of one who is speaking to you is of Adonai or is not.

[A] How does Yochanan say you can tell if a person speaking religious things is speaking by the Spirit of the Holy One?

[B] Does this mean that, if a person speaking religious things, somewhere within his speech or sermon, mentions that “*Yeshua has come in the flesh*”, that automatically makes everything said by such a person true or useful? Explain what you mean.

[C] What if a person speaking religious things does not use the words “*Yeshua has come in the flesh*” in his discussion of whatever topic is being discussed. Does that automatically mean that everything that person says is untrue or useless?

[D] Does I John 4:3 provide a new “litmus test” which is supposed to replace the test given us in Deuteronomy 11:28, 32? Explain why or why not.

*May all our children be taught by the Holy One;
and may they find great peace.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 112:4-8

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright, gracious, merciful, and righteous.

It is well with the man who deals graciously and lends.

He will maintain his cause in judgment.

For he will never be shaken.

The righteous will be remembered forever.

He will not be afraid of evil news.

His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Holy One.

His heart is established.

He will not be afraid in the end

when he sees his adversaries.