

Shiur L'Yom Revi'i¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: *Torah Shoftim:* Deuteronomy 18:9-22
Haftarah: Isaiah 51:21-23
B'rit Chadasha: John 1:22-23

The Holy One your God will raise up for you a prophet
[Deuteronomy 18:15]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 94:17-19;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the 2nd Petition, Teshuvah *[The Prayer of Repentance]*

Ki atah ba el-ha-aretz – When you enter the land ... ***asher-Adonai Eloheicha noten lach*** – that the Holy One your God is entrusting to you ... ***lo-tilmad la'asot ketoavot ha-goyim hahem*** – do not learn/teach/indulge/embrace any of the abominable behaviors of the people there. **Deuteronomy 18:9.**

There is a major *test* looming before us. When we begin to walk among and interact with the pagan nations, what will happen at the ‘*line of scrimmage*’ – *i.e.* at the ‘gates’ of our nation, of our cities, our villages, our homesteads, and our souls? The gates - the flash points of social, economic, and spiritual interaction – are the places at which the kingdom advances ... or surrenders. The key is to have the proper people in the gates – with the proper priorities, who know and follow the proper protocols,

As Go the Gates – sha'arim - So Goes the City;

As One sha'ars in his mind, will, and emotions, ken hu – so he is! *[Prov. 23:7]*

Will we wind up having a positive influence and uplifting impact on pagan society, as the Holy One has called and empowered us to do – or will we lose momentum let down our guard, and let the caustic cultures of the pagan peoples we meet have a negative influence and deleterious impact on us? Will we inspire them with our closeness to the Creator and our joyful fidelity to the Covenant – or will they infect us with their narcissism and entice us to dip our toes into their cesspools of fleshly indulgence, pseudo-intellectual arrogance, profanity-spewing irreverence, sexuality obsession, uncleanness, and lawlessness? Will we heal the land of their abominations – or will we pollute our own bloodlines with them? Will we walk in wisdom, understanding, and purity – or will we stumble into confusion, folly, and admixture, adopting a one-world-order narrative in the spin factories of which abandonment of our ‘Holy Nation’ mission is recast in *newspeak* as ‘tolerance’, ‘diversity’, and ‘woke-ness’? Will some of us – or our

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children – be so naïve and foolish as to adopt the worldview, embrace the perversions, buy into the deceptions, and appropriate the cultural identities of the serpent-bewitched, fruit of the tree of knowledge-ingesting heathens? When the time comes, will we rise and shine – or will we crash and burn?

Moshe has told us that our observance of the Torah will be seen as wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, and that if, as, when, and to the extent we walk in Torah as we are called to the nations will be in awe, saying: ***Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Holy One our God is to us, for whatever reason/purpose we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such righteous judgments ... ? Deuteronomy 4:6-7.*** But what if we deviate from the Plan? What if we get distracted? Moshe warns us, whatever we do, once we engage with the pagans there is one thing we most definitely must NOT do!

Ki atah ba el-ha-aretz asher-Adonai Eloheicha noten lach

When you go into the land that the Holy One is entrusting to you in stewardship

lo-tilmad la'asot ketoavot ha-goyim hahem.

Do not learn/teach/indulge/embrace any of the abominable behaviors of the people there.

[Deuteronomy 18:9]

Moshe then lists a number of prohibited occult practices, all geared toward invoking supernatural experience or assistance. We are supposed to model what it looks like to be close to and in constant communication with the One True God. **Deuteronomy 4:7.** Why would we ever even consider dallying with pagan forms of *black magic*? But what are we supposed to do when we need a little guidance for a big decision – or a little more than human help to confront a problem? Ah, that is the secret of Covenant Life. We are not just called to *sh'mar* and *asah* the Torah; we are called to know and *sh'ma* the Voice of the Holy One our God, and walk and talk with Him intimately, in a deep, abiding relationship of love and respect, all the days of our lives! The Holy One is to be our constant companion – and we are to keep a running conversation going with Him. Before we come to – or attempt to follow - Torah, we must first come to and start to walk with the Holy One of Israel. Torah is not the *source* of our relationship with our King you see; it is the *fruit* of it. It all has to start with *encountering* and *engaging with* the Holy One as a LIVING PERSONA through the medium of what in English is called 'prayer'. The real word, in Hebrew, is TEFILLAH. Without *tefillah*, Torah has no access point, no power base, no energy generator. So ... what is this thing the patriarchs knew as *tefillah*? The verb root is *palal*, meaning *to cut* and/or *peel away*. Think of the matrix of attitudes, moods, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, fears, conflicting loyalties, and opinions that are dancing around your brain at any given moment as an apple. If you want to get to the seeds inside the apple – i.e. get in touch with the essence and power of 'apple-ness' - you need to start peeling and

cutting the fleshly things you see on the surface away, layer by layer. That is how it is with 'prayer'. If you want to get in touch with the essence and power of the DIVINE PERSONA, you need to 'unburden' yourself of temporal things, the 'external you', and find - and start to stir up the embers of - the Divine Spark of the Holy One the He has implanted in your essential core. Please see Genesis 2:7 if you need a reminder of how and when this happened - long before you were even born: ***And the Holy One God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.***

Until one cuts away multiple layers of attitude, mood, thought, emotion, belief, fear, conflicting loyalty, and opinion, one cannot unburden enough to actually commune and converse with the Holy One in reverence and with an ear that can listen, a heart that can hear, and a will that can respond to what the Holy One says, counsels, and directs. The cutting away process - sometimes called denial-of-self - is the essence of *tefillah*. It takes practice. It takes dedication. It takes discipline. It takes perseverance. But it is worth it. For out of *tefillah* – i.e. reaching out to the Holy One from the 'belly of the fish' - comes the desire, and the energy, and the inspiration, to co-labor with and learn from the Holy One in the beautiful ways of Torah. Hence the Psalmist says: ***Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek shalom and pursue it. The eyes of the Holy One are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry The Holy One is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Psalm 34:12-18.*** *Tefillah* is not about the eloquence of your petitions, the format through which you approach, or the volume of your voice; it is about the cutting away of the layers of your flesh and pseudo-intellect, the sincerity of your surrender of self-will, and the hunger you have to hear the Voice and enter the Council Chambers of your King.

Earth to Heaven! Come in, Heaven!

But some people ask, with all sincerity: “Does God really speak to human beings?” They get all tripped up over things like how loud or soft, or masculine or feminine, His Voice might be. They question how a person could possibly tell the difference between the Creator’s Voice and one’s own thoughts, one’s own self-talk, and/or the whispers of the Adversary. We laugh – but they are serious. This is such a *no-brainer* for us that we tend to blow off the questions – and write off the questioners as skeptics ... or worse. We shouldn’t do either. We should truly hurt for them. They really don’t know. They have missed out – thus far in life, at least - on the greatest joy of human experience. They have never heard His Stunning, Pure, Wise, Sweet, and Absolutely Beautiful Voice. We, on the other hand, have been supremely blessed. Many times we have enjoyed the privilege –

vicariously at the very least – of tuning out both *the irreverent noise of the world* and *the confusing din of our own thoughts* – and delighting in the Voice that created the Universe. We have felt our hearts quiver – yet leap within our chests – at the sound of our Bridegroom’s call. We have heard Him speak actual intelligible words to us the way He did to Adam in the Garden; to Kayin in his man-cave; to Noach in his field; to Avram in his thoughts of barrenness, to Rivkah in her difficult pregnancy; to Ya’akov in his flight to Paddan-Aram; and to Moshe at his Thorn Bush. Ever since Moshe’s world-changing encounter at that bush he has served as the intermediary between Creator and Creation, Heaven and Earth. Playing the role of Friend of the Bridegroom in the Great Betrothal contracted at Horeb between the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov and B’nei Yisrael, the prophet has been faithful to report to us the content of every Divine Download he has received. His tongue has been the pen of a ready writer. What is more, Moshe has now reduced the communications he received from the Holy One to written form – for easy reference and for posterity. So ... is there even any need for the Holy One to speak/communicate further?

Is There More Than What Has Been Written?

We now have *the written tablets of the Torah*. Are we not to merely adhere to the written code of conduct spelled out in Torah, and be satisfied? The Holy One has, after all, told us WE are not to add to or subtract from the Torah. **Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32**. But though WE are not to add or subtract from the Torah ... *what about the Holy One?* Is He going to “add” to what He has given us in Torah? Put another way, one might ask, *isn’t His revealed word, on the written page, “enough”?* It is something to think about. In my mind however the question conjures up the image of Adam and Chava in the garden, having once eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, *running and hiding from the Creator*, desiring to live independent of relationship with Him. They had received His Word previously. That was ‘enough’ for them. They could rationalize around “... ***you will surely die***” - with a little help from the Serpent, that is. But the Creator wanted them to know that there was *much, much, more*. And He wants us to know that as well.

You see, the question is really not whether the Holy One’s written word [be it Torah, or TaNaKh or the Brit Chadasha] is “enough” - the question is *whether we were created to have an intimate, ongoing, interactive relationship with the Holy One as our Covenant Partner and Bridegroom-King* - or merely to make sense of and try to follow the written instructions Moshe has left for us. Put another way, the question is “*are we now, because the Holy One’s word has been reduced to writing and made available to us, to be deprived of the kind of intimate*

*relationship the patriarchs enjoyed?” They all had regular “God encounters”, and received progressive revelation over their lifetimes. *Is all we get a list of dos and don’ts?*² Heaven forbid, Beloved! As wonderful as the Holy One’s Torah is, as precious and beautiful and healing and true and powerful as His written words are, without the quickening breath of His Spirit upon each soul, His walking and talking with each of His children evening and morning, a true *sh’ma* lifestyle is impossible, a “work of the flesh” destined for failure and frustration. Our Bridegroom-King *must* reveal Himself personally and speak to such a people *regularly* before we can listen, *hear, internalize* His Truths, and *live according to what we heard*.*

The Holy One created us with *the innate need for such intimacy*. If we are to live by “faith” - Hebrew *emunah*, passionate fidelity to the Holy One’s revealed instructions for living - we must *receive* those instructions *in our innermost being*, not merely our minds. And we must have them quickened and taught to us by the Holy One Himself, in the context of an ongoing relationship, and through ongoing communication, with the Holy One.

In today’s aliyah Moshe reminds us that this was the result of what happened at Horev, after the Great Theophany, when we cried out as one man ‘*Let me not hear again the voice of the Holy One my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.*’ **Deuteronomy 18:16**. A lot has happened since that day. We have grown up with, grown accustomed to, and gotten very comfortable with having Moshe serve as our inspired intermediary. But this arrangement cannot go on forever. Moshe is 120 years old. And we now know that he is not going to cross over the Jordan River into the land with us. What will we do when Moshe is gone? Once Moshe is out of the picture, how - if at all - is the Divine Bridegroom planning to communicate with us? These questions are of critical importance not just to the generation of the Great Crossing described in the book of Y’hoshua [Joshua], but to every generation of the people whose life is to be based upon the *sh’ma* calling — i.e. the call to live by the inspiration and the kedusha energy that inheres in “*every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Holy One*”. Where will we find our Thorn Bush? Where will we discover our portal? And who, if anyone, will be our Mediator?

We need a real-time source of guidance for daily living – not a data base of theology. We need in-ear counsel for the moment-by-moment decisions that confront us – not a system of symbols, sentiments, and sacraments. We need a pipeline of wise, outside-the-box solutions to the thorny challenges of mortal life

² Not that a list of dos and don’ts, if that is what the Holy One gave us, would not be ‘enough’. Of course it would. It would be *more than we deserve*, and more than we could have hoped to ask for. But it is not what His covenant provides for us.

– not a pile of published propaganda. Should we be content to rely upon common sense, education, experience, publishers, preachers, and ‘principles? Or does the Holy One have something more personal, more intimate, and more spiritual in mind for us? Is this Covenant alive? Is our Covenant Partner accessible – and communicative - when we need Him most? Can we really expect Him to help us? Can we really expect Him to *talk to us*? Or to at least *send someone – angel, human, or donkey – into our world to pass on His Thoughts and Directions to us*?

Once Moshe is gone, **how** - in what manner - will we receive *further revelation*? Note that I did not say “*new*” revelation. The God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya’akov is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His Eternal Word will not change. He will not contradict Himself. He will not replace one revelation with another - any more than He will lie or break His covenant with you or with Israel. He will, however, give progressive revelation - building upon the elemental and unchanging truths He has spoken in His Torah, and teaching us what it means and how to apply it to our lives. Any apparent “*new*” revelation must be compared to and judged by, and interpreted so as to be completely consistent with, the original written revelation given in the Torah. The Torah, you see, is the **seed** from which all other revelation sprouts.

***If What We Have Received Is Not All There Is,
What Else Are We to Expect from the Holy One?***

How else besides the written Word will the Holy One communicate with us? This is a controversial question, but today’s aliyah gives us some guidelines. The first thing we are told, very clearly, is that further revelation and communication will NOT come through the sources the nations around us use. If we try to get spiritual information from such sources, our Divine Bridegroom wants us to know, the information WON’T BE COMING FROM HIM, and IT WON’T BE GOOD FOR US!

How do other people, of other cultures, get “in touch with the supernatural”? Primarily through *occult practices*. The Egyptians, for instance, were masters of “magic arts”. The Babylonians consulted astrologers to determine the future and plan their wars and daily activities. The Moav’im [Moabites] hired soothsayers to pronounce curses on their enemies [e.g. *Bila’am*]. Some peoples searched for omens in the entrails of animals or in tealeaves or tarot cards or Ouija boards or in the lines on the palm of one’s hand. Some sought contact with the dead through “mediums” who “channel” spirits [our first King, Shaul, tried this!]. Some meditate and/or chant to interact with “spirit guides”. Some consult the horoscopes.

What do these ‘other ways’ of getting in touch with supernatural forces all have in common? They are *manipulations*. They are man-initiated. They are designed to ‘sneak a peek’ at something hidden. They all constitute spiritual *voyeurism*. They are the opposite of the *sh’ma* lifestyle. The *sh’ma* lifestyle trusts the Divine Bridegroom to tell us what we need to know, when and as we need to know it.

Moshe warns *against* occult methods of dealing with the supernatural world – and trying to manipulate supernatural forces they do not understand - in some of the strongest terms a Hebrew can use. He tells us these practices are *to’ebah* - abomination! We are not to dally with them. They are *repulsive* to the Holy One, because He knows that they are much more sinister than they advertise themselves to be. He knows that they carry a “virus” that will destroy the *sh’ma*-software of His Covenant people much the way malware and ransomware destroy the hard drive of a computer. He knows that they are so dark and dangerous that *they must be rejected completely*.

The Nine Occult Abominations That Caused the Kena’ani To Have to Be Expelled from the Land of Israel

Moshe describes nine separate occult practices that were used by the Kena’ani to control and manipulate the spirit world – and oppress people. These nine practices are:

1. ***Making one’s son or his daughter pass through the fire*** [i.e. everything from human sacrifice of children to foreign ‘gods’ to the ancient equivalent of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA);
2. ***using divination/fortune telling;***
3. ***practicing sorcery;***
4. ***using spells, incantations, or enchantments;***
5. ***sorcery/spellcasting***
6. ***snake charming/hypnotic suggestions;***
7. ***witchcraft/magic tricks;***
8. ***wizardry – mastery/practice of multiple occult arts;***
9. ***necromancy – i.e. conjuring or consulting with the dead or ‘ghosts’***

Moshe makes it clear that anyone who does any of these things is an abomination to the Holy One – and that the doing of these things played a major role, if not THE MAJOR ROLE, in making it essential that the Kena’ani be removed totally from the land.

What's So Bad About A Little Magic? What is So Dangerous About Indulging Our Curiosity Relative to the Supernatural Realm?

So ... what is so wrong with a little *fortune telling, magic, and the like*? It is *the serpent's way*. It is the way men can declare themselves independent from the Holy One, and of any need to listen to Him, relate to Him, or do what He says. If a person can learn to foresee the future - and manipulate the world [God's creation] through supernatural means, you see, he comes to believe not only that he does not *need* God, but that in fact *God is his enemy*. Isn't this the ploy the serpent used to entice *Chava* [Eve]? This is the ultimate rebellion. This is anti-God and, as we will shortly see, Anti-Messiah. So back to our question: how will the Divine Bridegroom communicate with us? How will we receive further revelation? A part, at least, of the answer, is found in verse 15:

Navi m'kirbeicha me'acheicha

A prophet³, in your midst, from among your brethren,

kamoni yakim lecha Adonai Eloheicha

like me, will the Holy One Your God raise up,

elav tishma'un

and it is to him that you must listen.

[Deuteronomy 18:15]

There will be further, ongoing communication from on High. There will be no need of seeking out the ways of the pagans to have interaction with the supernatural realm. Moshe promises that the Holy One will raise up from among *Am Yisrael a navi* – i.e. a prophet through whom the Holy One will release words of life. This promised *navi* will be like Moshe. Moshe then explains this *mishpat* historically. He reminds us that way back at Sinai we asked the Divine Bridegroom for an intermediary, to hear the Holy One's words [see **Exodus 20:15**] and interpret them on our behalf. As a response to this request, Moshe tells us, the Holy One has decreed that we will be given someone to sit 'in Moshe's seat' and hear and interpret the Holy One's instructions for us even after Moshe is gone the way of man.

In today's aliyah Moshe actually quotes the Divine Bridegroom's direct instruction to him at Sinai, as follows:

³ The word our English Bibles translate as "*prophet*" is the Hebrew word ***navi*** [nun, yod, beit, alef], Strong's Hebrew word #5030, pronounced *naw-vee'*. The word is first used in reference to Avraham [Genesis 20:7]. The Holy One told Avimelech of Gerar, in a dream, that Avraham '***is a navi, and he will pray for you, and you will live***'. The Holy One also called Aharon a ***navi*** unto Moshe. See Exodus 7:1: '***I have made you as a god unto Par'oh, and Aharon your brother will be your navi.***'

Navi akim lahem mikerev acheihem kamocha v'natati
I will set up a prophet for them from among their brethren, like you;

devarai b'fiv v'diber aleihem
My word I will place in his mouth, and he will tell them

et kol-asher atzavienu
all that I direct him.
[Deuteronomy 18:18]

This is a *wonderful promise*. It is an act of love on the part of the Holy One, Who promises us a 'Friend of the Bridegroom' to communicate with us His Betrothed even after Moshe is gone. We are then left with the following very pertinent questions:

[a] Who – exactly, is *the Navi* that the Holy One is promising to raise up?
and

[b] when, exactly, will He raise *the Navi* up for us to see?

So, Who is The Navi? And When Is He Coming?

Is *Y'hoshua*, who will lead the people into Kena'an immediately after Moshe's death, the promised *Navi*? Or is there to be for us one such *Navi per generation* - i.e. first *Y'hoshua*, then the judges, one by one, then *Sh'muel* [Samuel], then *Natan* [Nathan], then *Eliyahu* [Elijah], then *Elishahu* [Elisha], and so on? Or, we may ask, is *Yeshua the Navi* promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18? In a sense the answer is probably "all of the above". *Y'hoshua* certainly heard directly from the Holy One [see Joshua 1:1-9, 5:2,9, 6:2-5, 7:10-15, 8:1-2,18, 11:6, and 20:1-6 for instance], and *Y'hoshua* then certainly relayed the Holy One's instructions to us as a people, acting as an intermediary very much like Moshe. *Y'hoshua* even followed Moshe's example in *writing the Torah* and giving it to us. See Joshua 24:25-26. Likewise the *shoftim* [judges] that followed *Y'hoshua* and the *nevi'im* [prophets] of the succeeding generations each acted, in varying degrees of clarity of course, as both recipients of the Holy One's direct communications and disseminators thereof.

In one sense therefore the promise of *the Navi* was a promise by our Covenant Partner in Heaven of continued verbal communication *forever*, on a "need to know" basis, with the Holy One as the initiator of further revelation, uninfluenced by human attempts at manipulation. I like that. I like it a lot. I want to know He is still communicating with me – and all of His creation. I want to know He is offering a living, breathing, relationship – to me and to my kids, and to their kids, and so on, and so on, forever. In another sense however the application of the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15,18, in its fullness, certainly relates to *Yeshua*. In *Yeshua* we see *The Navi* 'like unto Moshe' very, very

clearly. We see *the Navi* in Yeshua's ministry on earth, c.4 BCE to 29 CE. And we see *the Navi* in Yeshua's gift of 'another Comforter', promised in John 14, and partially fulfilled in Acts 2. And we know *the Navi* will, also, soon *come again*. In the meantime, we are to listen carefully to [*i.e. sh'ma and sh'mar*] what *the Navi* is saying. All other voices, no matter how persuasive, or how popular or familiar, we *test* – very, very carefully.

Our Responsibility Under the Torah to Test the Prophets

The Holy One further instructs us in today's aliyah that prophets and prophecy are not to be taken at face value. It is clear that the Holy One can – and does – speak through the mouth of prophets. As Shaul taught in I Corinthians 14, while our first obligation is to ***pursue love, we are also to desire the manifestations of the Ruach HaQodesh – and especially that we may prophesy.*** This is because ***he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*** I Corinthians 14:1-3. The Holy One has given us many equippers in this age to help us introduce a Kingdom-Scented Society into our sphere of influence – and second highest in the list of equippers is *prophets*. I Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11. We are therefore not to quench the flow of the *Ruach* by looking upon and/or treating prophets or prophesies with contempt. I Thessalonians 5:19--20. But we are supposed to test all things - humbly, and respectfully – in a way that honors the first commandment of love. And we are to hold fast only to that which is *tov* [*i.e. defined by Torah as 'good', beneficial, and nurturing of life, health, and peace*]. I Thessalonians 5:21: see also I John 4:1. Hence every word of every person's mouth is to be subjected to the Holy One's litmus tests. We are to run everything we hear – sermons, prophesies, teachings, exhortations, spiritual songs, statements of *halakah, lashon ha ra* – EVERYTHING - through Torah's '*sh'ma* filters'. We are to know – and clearly distinguish – the difference between the Voice of our Bridegroom-King and the voice of 'another'. We are to hold fast only to that which is *tov* – *i.e.* that which releases a delightful fountain of wholesome, beautiful, life-enhancing wisdom and fruitfulness.

What if the '*sh'ma* filters' we are trained by Torah to employ sound warnings of deception? What if someone comes into our assigned sphere of influence – our presence, our home, etc. – and in our hearing prophesies *falsely*? Moshe told us that, in Eretz Yisrael, when Torah is our constitution, anyone who speaks a prophecy in our hearing and within our sphere of influence is after a Torah-consistent trial, to be *put to death* if it is determined that either [a] he presumed [Hebrew *zadon* – *i.e.* in pride] to speak in the name of Holy One something the Holy One did not command him to say, or [b] he spoke *in the name of any other god*.

That does not mean that we are to become '*False Prophecy Police*'. It does not

mean that everyone who gets on the internet, on social media, on radio, on television, or on *YouTube*, and publishes spiritual-sounding teachings or prophetic words onto the public airwaves of the country in which we live is our enemy – or even our business. We have far more important things to do than to fixate on things like that. We have assigned tasks to fulfill. We are here, first and foremost, to release the sweet fragrance of a Kingdom-of-Heaven scented society into the world. We are here primarily to announce and model ‘good news’ to the world. We have to learn to keep our priorities straight. Only when false prophecies directly affect us or those over whom the Holy One has appointed us to serve are we to concern ourselves with what people in other spheres of influence are teaching or ‘prophesying’ to people over whom we have been given no open door of influence. We have to learn to stay calm, and avoid becoming negative in our approach to the world. We have to be careful not to either succumb to or induce others toward paranoia, fear, outrage, or any form of ‘bad news’ instead of the glad tidings, hope, *simchah*, and *shalom* of the Kingdom. In other words, we are never to let our mission on earth be robbed from us by ‘witch hunting’, ‘heresy busting’, or any other form of rabbit chasing. We are called to stay far too busy with the King’s agenda to leave our assigned posts and ‘go out looking’ for false prophets, false teachers, etc. We are to be alert for such predators the way a doe remains alert for a wolf. Every doe knows there are hundreds of wolves in the world. But the wise doe knows that only when a wolf starts stalking her or her fawns is she to initiate protocols against it.

Recognizing the Difference Between Good News, Bad News, No News, and Fake News

Moshe gives us a simple *test* by which we are to be able to know if a prophecy that has been spoken in our hearing is – or is not – from the Holy One:

*If you say in your heart, How are we to know the word that the Holy One has not spoken?
when a prophet speaks in the name of the Holy One,
if the thing doesn't follow, nor happen,
that is the thing that the Holy One has not spoken:
the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you are not to be afraid of him.
[Deuteronomy 18:21-22]*

The *good news* of today’s aliyah is that the God that spoke often and powerfully to Avraham, to Yitzchak, to Ya’akov and to Moshe has promised to continue to communicate with His people - to keep the lines of communication open - *throughout history*. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven has not just left us with a wonderful instruction manual for life; He has promised to raise up a prophet – *the Navi* of Deuteronomy 18:15,18 - to help us interpret and apply it.

The *bad news* is that, alas, *this will still not be enough for two groups of people.*

For some people, you see, a written list of dos and don'ts is all they want. Further communication from the Divine Bridegroom is, for such people, too much to think about, and requires too much intimacy, and too much of a *Bridal orientation*. For other people communication on *our Covenant Partner in Heaven's* terms, in *His* timing, will be hard to accept. They want a "word" NOW, on *their* terms, and *on demand*. Such will, unfortunately, be willing to change the dial on their spiritual "radio" in order to receive the message they want to hear, from whatever source it might come. And alas there will always be a Serpent, and a few hundred false prophets, Ezekiel 34 'shepherds', and corrupt *kohanim* more than willing to oblige.

The *sh'ma* filter Moshe offers us actually has two lenses. Both flow out of the Hebrew verb root 'bo'. First, *does the thing the prophet has said flow with and 'move' in a consistent direction with the Revelation of Torah?* In other words, *'is what is being said at odds with the attributes, personality, message, and objectives of the Holy One that have been revealed in Torah?*

Secondly, *does what the prophet has said in our midst bear the fruit of righteousness?* Does it actively advance the Grand Redemptive Plan? Is it functional to the point of actually advancing what the Holy One is doing in the world – or is it just a matter of 'intellect' or 'knowledge' that puffs up or appeals to men's fallen minds, easily-seduced wills, and fleshly emotions? Does it *honor the Holy One – or does it focus attention (positive or negative) on men and/or their agendas, their ministries and organizations?* Does it engender reverence for and trust of the Holy One – or does it engender fear of, or anything but love for, our fellow man? Does it primarily draw attention to the prophet – or for that matter to anyone or anything besides the *Messianic Vision*?

It all comes down to *sh'ma*-ing the voice of our Bridegroom-King and *sh'mar*-ing His Covenant. We are in training for Responsive and Responsible Kingdom Administration – and false prophets and teachers are not to be our focus. They are, in the Holy One's wisdom, allowed to come into our world to test our hearts. Will we allow them to sway us away from Torah and our assigned mission? Will we allow our flesh to panic, over-react, and create havoc and drama? Or will we remain calm, remain faithful to the Holy One, the Torah, and stay on-task and actively engaged in the Bridegroom-King's Grand Redemptive Mission?

Questions For Today's Study

1. In Deuteronomy 18:9-12 Moses lists 9 things which are "abominations" to the Holy One and in which God's people are not to have any participation.

[A] List the nine things that are described as "abominations" in today's

aliyah;

[B] Look up four of the nine things in Strong's and in Gesenius, and describe the Hebraic word picture you begin to see regarding each.

[C] Look up the word "abomination" in your dictionary and in Strong's and Gesenius and describe the Hebraic word picture you see regarding that noun and its verb root.

[D] What other things besides occult practices does the Bible describe as "abominations"? [**Hint**: See Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13; Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Proverbs 6:16-19]

2. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven promised that He would communicate with His people in a different way than through occult practices. He did not promise to give a word "on demand", and He did not provide any formula which could be used to manipulate Him into speaking in a certain way.

[A] How did the Holy One promise to communicate with Israel?

[B] How is this form of communication different from the kind of communication with the supernatural practiced by other nations?

[C] How does this promise relate to Messiah?

[D] How are occult practices "anti-Messiah"?

3. How did Moshe say Israel would know if a person who claimed or seemed to be a prophet was truly speaking for the Holy One?

4. In today's Haftarah reading from Isaiah 51 we read:

*Therefore hear now this, you afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:
Thus says the Holy One your GOD, and your God who pleads the cause of his people,
"Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of staggering,
even the bowl of the cup of my wrath; you will drink it again no more:
and I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you,
who have said to your soul, 'Bow down, that we may go over';
and you have laid your back as the ground,
and as the street, to those who go over."*

[Isaiah 51:21-23]

To whom does the Holy One say He is about to give the "cup" or "goblet" from which Jerusalem had been drinking?

5. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today *Yochanan* [John] the Immerser finally tells the *kohanim* [priests] and *Levi'im* [Levites] who he is. He is a *Voice Crying in the Wilderness*. Thanks be to our Covenant Partner in Heaven for giving us such a voice!

*They [the kohanim and Levi'im] said therefore to him [Yochanan]
"Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us.
What do you say about yourself?"*

*He [Yochanan] replied, "I am **the voice of one crying in the wilderness**,
'Make straight the way of the Holy One,' as Yeshayahu Ha-navi [the prophet] said."*

[A] Write a list of all the people *Yochanan* [John] had previously told these questioners he was not; then write down who he said he was.

[B] What do you think the priests and Levi'im thought John *meant* by describing himself the way he did?

[C] Applying what you have learned about prophecy from today's Torah, write a paragraph "judging" John's prophecy (in other words, tell why you believe what John said was "of God").

[D] Was Yochanan proclaiming a "new" revelation – or the same revelation given by the Holy One to Moshe? [Explain your answer].

[E] Explain how the revelation Yochanan was proclaiming was "progressive" revelation (how it built upon, and was consistent with, prior revelation in Scripture).

6. Go back to Isaiah 40, to the passage that Yochanan [John] quoted in describing who he was, and why he was saying such strange, controversial things. What was the significance of Yochanan claiming to be the one in that passage?

*May you be content to wait patiently for the voice
of our Covenant Partner in Heaven ... and never follow that of a stranger.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 94:17—19

*In the multitude of my thoughts within me,
Your comforts delight my soul.
Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with you,
who brings about mischief by statute?*

*They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.*

*But the Holy One has been my high tower,
My God, the rock of my refuge.
He has brought on them their own iniquity,
and will cut them off in their own wickedness.
The Holy One, our God, will cut them off.*