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Parashat רֵאָה (R'eh - "See!")

30 Av 5775

ל' בָּאָב תשע"ה

Spiritual Vision – Reflections on parashat רֵאָה

תורה

Torah:

Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17

הפטרה

Haphtarah:

Isaiah 54:11-55:5

ברית

Brit Chadasha:

חדשה

John 7:37-52

(Jeff Feinberg; Jack Farber)

1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 John 4:1-6 (David Stern)

It is my privilege to share with you some thoughts connected to this week's Torah portion, or parasha. This parasha is the 47th of the year (7 more to go, then we start the reading cycle over again!) The portion's Hebrew name is רֵאָה (R'eh - which means: "See!"). Parashat רֵאָה (like all of scripture) is a goldmine with many treasures that can be gleaned. But that one word: רֵאָה got me thinking about spiritual vision. Lots of people can (and do) say lots of things about what spiritual vision is and how it works. The scriptures are the microscope, the telescope and the glasses for true spiritual vision. There is much that can be said from G-D's word, but let's look at just a few things.

We physically see with physical eyes, but did you know that hearts have eyes? In the same way that the mind is affected by the images that come to it through the eyes, the heart is affected by what the eyes of the heart focus on. Rav Sha'ul (the apostle Paul) prayed for the Ephesians to have the **eyes of their hearts** enlightened, to know the hope they were called to¹, that they would have spiritual vision. This vision is not just something that makes life better; it can make

¹ Ephesians 1:16-18

the difference between spiritual life and death. Proverbs is clear: Without spiritual vision, people open themselves up to evils² that can poison their souls. Death doesn't necessarily follow poisoning, but it often does. Sam Shepard, a playwright who won the Pulitzer Prize³, wrote:

People are starved for the truth, and when something comes along that even looks like the truth, people will latch onto it because everything's so false. People are starved for a way of life - they're hunting for a way to be or to act toward the world⁴.

We need to know The Truth, and not be distracted by whatever only resembles The Truth. Often, the would-be Truth resembles the "Real McCoy" very closely. Someone might think their spiritual vision is working fine when really the eyesight of their heart has been compromised. Other times, spiritual eyesight is working fine, but deliberately or by habit, we move our eyes past what we consider unimportant. Part of a classic Simon and Garfunkel song goes: "*A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest*"⁵. Likewise, the eyes of the heart tend to look for and see what they want to see. Jeremiah 17:9 bears this out: "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*"⁶. When our heart's eyes focus on something, how much of what is seen corresponds to reality or not, is another matter.

You may have heard the expression of someone looking at life through "rose-colored glasses". Everyone, without exception, has some kind of world-view, a pair of glasses they look at the world through, or a specific pattern of spiritual cataracts or glaucoma that effects how they view life. Even the so-called atheist believes in and has faith in something. If they are employed, they have faith that if they continue showing up at work and do their job, they will keep receiving a pay cheque and will continue having the means to support themselves. If they drive a car, they have faith that when they approach an intersection and step on the brake, the brakes will work and stop the car. If they climb some stairs, they have faith that as they go up higher, the stairs will support their weight, and they won't go crashing through to the basement. If they order food at a restaurant, they have faith that a forkful of the food they ordered won't contain cyanide, and kill them when they eat it. It is impossible to function in life without exercising faith dozens, hundreds or even thousands of times a day. Hebrews 11:1: "...*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*". Faith placed in what though, is the key question.

When the eyes of our heart look at something in life, and our hearts form the images of whatever we are looking at, how well do those images correspond to reality? Today, there are countless schools of psychology and philosophies that are supposed to help. Some are more useful than others. One school of psychology impressed me: Reality Therapy⁷! But the biblical

² Proverbs 29:18. The Hebrew verb is: "*Without a vision, people* פָּרַע" (Strong's Concordance, Word H6544, Niphal Imperfect). פ (mouth, open, swallow) + רַע (evil) = פָּרַע

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Shepard

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/29/theater/myths-dreams-realities-sam-shepard-s-america.html>

⁵ From the song "The Boxer"; Album: Bridge Over Troubled Water; 1970

⁶ NIV

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality_therapy

approach to spiritual vision and heart-life makes the most sense and is the most useful. Three things come together in it: Head, Heart and Something Certain Outside Ourselves:

- 1) Head - Clear and logical thinking that does not suppress emotions. There is an anti-intellectual spirit in our culture that we must guard against. It is not in today's Japanese or Chinese cultures. This may be why their economies are doing so well!
- 2) Heart - Being aware of emotions and understanding emotional causes and effects without suppressing feelings. The Hebrew word picture⁸ for heart (לֵב, "lev") is "*That which controls the inside*"⁹. The heart won't allow us to do anything it doesn't **want** to do. We cannot control what other people do to us or chance things that may happen, but we can control how we process and respond to what happens to us.
- 3) Something Certain Outside Ourselves - **An objective standard** that we know is objective, and is independent of our own thoughts and emotions. Such a standard is the only way to be sure we are not living in a self-deceived fantasy world of our own making.

Some people look to others of like mind to for a standard to check themselves against to try to make sure they are not "*bound[] in a nutshell,...count[ing themselves]..king[s] of infinite space*"¹⁰. They may rely on the teachings or writings a person or group. But these are not firm enough reference points. *Mein Kampf* may have made sense to Germans in Germany before WWII, but after WWII, this book was proven "out to lunch". During WWII, it made sense to some Japanese that a teenage boy was god incarnate, and if you killed yourself serving him, you could become a god also. But after the flight of a plane called *Anola Gay*, it didn't make sense anymore. The collective writing of one people group over generations is better, but still not enough. Since the 1870's¹¹, Jehovah's Witnesses have amassed a large body of literature, but few JWs critically interact with that literature for themselves. If they did, they would see the Witnesses as the **non-prophet** organization that it is! (dozens of false prophecies over many years)¹². The **ONLY** objective standard that can give us full assurance that we are not self-deluded is the G-D of the universe and what HE revealed in the library known as scripture. The G-D of Israel living inside someone gives that person (Jew or Gentile!) **the mirror** in which to examine the heart and mind. To **anyone** who takes the time to confirm them as such, the scriptures pass the test of being an unshakeable objective standard sturdy enough to bear the full weight of life. Not the man-made gobbledy-goop that shows up every generation, or that may even persist over multiple generations, but 66 books unlike any others, written by 40-some-odd authors from different walks of life, in different parts of the world, over 1500 years. Prophecies fulfilled where you don't have to stretch and fudge them (like with Nostradamus'), but spot-on predictions that only the sovereign creator of the universe, existing outside of time and space, could have put there.

⁸ See Seekins, Dr. Frank T.; Hebrew Word Pictures for background

⁹ ל (ruler's staff) + ב (tent/house, the inside) = לֵב

¹⁰ Hamlet, II.ii

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses

¹² <http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/cults/exposejw/index.cfm>

In the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve ate the fruit the L-RD commanded them not to, and **[the] eyes [of their hearts] were opened**¹³. But opened how? In what sense? It wasn't a physical opening. Nor was it an opening to good; their eyes were already open to the light of the Truth. In Habakkuk, we learn that G-D's eyes are pure and cannot look on evil¹⁴; it hurts HIS eyes. In the same way, before eating the fruit, our first parents held evil at arm's length, ruling over it the same way G-D told Cain he would rule over sin if only he would trust G-D¹⁵. Adam and Eve were doing what David wrote in Psalm 101, not setting before the eyes of their hearts anything what was worthless¹⁶. They used to do what Paul urged in Philippians 4¹⁷, that "whatever [wa]s true, whatever [wa]s honorable, whatever [wa]s just, whatever [wa]s pure, whatever [wa]s lovely, whatever [wa]s commendable, if there [wa]s any excellence, if there [wa]s anything worthy of praise, t[o incline their hearts toward such] things". Like Job's eyes in Job 31¹⁸, their heart's eyes were sealed with a בְּרִית ("breet"), a covenant, protecting against spiritual glaucoma and cataracts. Adam and Eve had self-control, and were like the fortified cities of Hatzor, Megiddo and Jerusalem. Proverbs 25:28: "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls"¹⁹.

The eyes of our hearts can be opened to good or to evil. When Hagar and Ishmael were in the desert and needed water, G-D **opened [Hagar's] eyes**²⁰ to see the well that saved her and her son. This was an opening to something good. But when the eyes of the heart are opened to evil, a change in the heart occurs. Adam and Eve came to **know** both good and evil. The Hebrew of that word **know** carries the meaning **to be intimate with**²¹. Their new-found knowledge of evil was the knowledge of something real, not of just some philosophical abstraction. Evil impacts us in concrete ways; this cannot be overstated. Evil doesn't just effect people; G-D revealed to Paul that even the physical realm is in bondage to corruption²².

We are children of the light and the day, not of the darkness and the night²³. But we can be ensnared by evil because it seems like this whole other sphere of reality to operate in, and we

¹³ Verse 7

¹⁴ 1:13

¹⁵ Genesis 4:7

¹⁶ Verse 3

¹⁷ Verse 8

¹⁸ Verse 1

¹⁹ ESV

²⁰ Genesis 21:19

²¹ Strong's Concordance, word H3045

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3045&t=KJV>)

²² Romans 8:21-23

²³ 1 Thessalonians 5:5

think we might experience so much more of life if we can maneuver both in the dark and in the light. We want to go where we want to go and not have to bring a light with us. At a crime scene where police suspect blood is present, but they can't see it, they spray a chemical called Luminol²⁴ and then turn out the lights. Any trace amounts of blood present then glow with an eerie glow. We can confuse such a dark, eerie, humanly made glow with the true brightness of daylight, when they are not on the same level. The sun is a **source** of light; the moon only **reflects** light. We get in trouble when we confuse reflections of light with the actual source of light itself - confusing Creator and Creation. The woman in Revelation 12 with the crown of 12 stars on her head is clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet; not the other way around.

When people take mind-altering drugs, some of the altered states of consciousness achieved can be **real** states, not all are necessarily delusional or psychotic. Same as when people practice the occult (very popular today), there can be real interaction with real spirit beings that can make a person feel good, powerful, or in-control. In the New Testament and in the translation of the Torah used widely by our people more than 200 years before Messiah Yeshua, the Greek work for **sorcery/ witchcraft** is φαρμακεία²⁵ ("pharmakeeah"). This is where the English **pharmacy** comes from. The Hebrew word for **sorcery**, קישוף ("keeshoof"²⁶) where φαρμακεία comes from, conveys the same picture: the mortar and pestle used even today by pharmacists to grind ingredients and make compounds²⁷.



²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luminol>

²⁵ Galatians 5:20

²⁶ <http://www.morfix.co.il/sorcery>

²⁷ Strong's concordance, word H3784

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3784&t=ESV>). כ (picture of the palm of the hand, bowl) + קשף (crush [<http://www.morfix.co.il/%D7%A9%D7%A3>]) = קשף

In the last years of the northern kingdom of Israel (8th century BC), people from all over the ancient world started going to the Oracle of Delphi in Greece. People visited this oracle for around 1000 years. During a nine-day period once a year, the priestess, the Pithia²⁸, would sit in the Delphi temple, right under a fault in the earth. Gases would waft up from the earth and the Pithia would breathe the gases in. She would go into an altered state and people sought her advice while she was in these states. The advice she would give was of a different kind than what she could give in a normal state²⁹. Although it is possible to do some navigating in the dark without light; although we can whip up the spiritual equivalents of Luminol and even see some things in the dark, most of the time, there is no way to see that sharp rusty pipe walking in the dark before you cut your foot on it, and then get tetanus. Feeling around in the dark, you feel the fur, the nose, the fangs; then you hear the growling – soft and slow at first, then louder and faster – by then it's too late. You wonder if those teeth marks in your neck will ever disappear! Adam and Eve found a hole in the ground that they were not able to see into, the viper's den. They were curious what was inside it, and stuck their hands in that hole and felt around. The Black Mamba bit them. The venom has been wreaking havoc in us ever since.

Our first parents came to know both good and evil. But unlike G-D, **human beings are not designed for sustained intimate contact with both good and evil**. In the human heart, one of these always tries to triumph over the other³⁰. The more we give in to evil, the easier it will be in the future to give into the same evil (or other evils) the next time. The more we learn how to **do good with the right motivations and for the right reasons**, the more of the Eastern Brown Snake venom gets worked out of our systems, and the more G-D's will truly become our own. Messiah living in and through us is the antidote for the venom! Just like when we were bitten by venomous snakes, and Moses made the bronze serpent on the pole, and we looked at it and were healed³¹; in the same way, when the eyes of our heart see Yeshua on הַצֵּלָב ("HaTslav"), on the cross, we are healed. But later, we started worshipping that bronze snake³². It is possible *in the heart* to make images of G-D and live out devotion to them, instead of directing the worship of the heart **to** G-D directly.

When the eyes of the heart are opened to either good or evil, there is a strong social component to it. In Genesis 3, that Hebrew verb for **open**, פָּקַח ("pakach"), can refer to opening eyes or ears³³, and is an interpersonal word (opening an object, like a door or something like that has a different word). Spiritual vision and social vision can never be separated. If love for G-D burns in

²⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythia>

²⁹ Delphi: The Bellybutton of the Ancient World - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBnOs8GmYHk>; Ancient.Secrets - Mysteries Oracle Delphi (Greece) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilz8kYYjKwM>

³⁰ Matthew 6:24; Galatians 5:17

³¹ Numbers 21:4-9

³² 2 Kings 18:4

³³ <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6491&t=NIV>

our hearts, the eyes our hearts will have the spiritual light they need to see by. We know from 1 John 4 that our love for G-D is genuine only if it extends into love for each other³⁴.

The Torah tells us that the snake was the most עָרוֹם ("aroom") of the creatures that HASHEM created³⁵. Some translations render עָרוֹם as "shrewd"³⁶, "subtil"³⁷, "cunning"³⁸, or "crafty"³⁹. But עָרוֹם literally means **naked**⁴⁰. The word picture for עָרוֹם is **to have unshakeable social awareness**⁴¹. When you have a man and a woman together naked, guaranteed, there is social awareness! When some 70 years ago the images of us, naked in death and concentration camps across Europe in were made public, social awareness was raised that still hasn't dissipated (may it never!). In Matthew 10, Yeshua himself commanded us to have the same עָרוֹם quality; to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves⁴². The Greek translation of the Torah we saw earlier, made over 200 years before Yeshua's time, is known today as the Septuagint (or LXX). In Matthew 10, Yeshua was pointing directly back to the עָרוֹם passage in Genesis, because when we compare Yeshua's statement in Matthew 10 to the Septuagint of Genesis 3, the exact same words are used (only the forms differ):

γινεσθε σοφονιμοι ος φεις (Matthew 10:16)

δ φς ν φρονιμτατος (Genesis 3:1, LXX)

Another word in parashat R'eh got my attention, and this will be the last point I'll develop. It's in Deuteronomy 12, verses 2 and 3:

*...destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and **destroy their name** out of that place⁴³.*

³⁴ Verse 20

³⁵ Genesis 3:1

³⁶ JPS

³⁷ KJV

³⁸ NKJV

³⁹ NIV; ESV

⁴⁰ <http://www.morfix.co.il/%D7%A2%D6%B8%D7%A8%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%9D>

⁴¹ עָר (alert, vigilant, aware of, conscious of) + ו (a nail, tent peg, to affix something) + מ (water, people [Isaiah 66:12; Revelation 17:15]) = עָרוֹם

⁴² Verse 16

⁴³ ESV (my emphasis)

Quite a few translations have destroy the **names** of their gods (plural)⁴⁴; but the Hebrew is clear: the gods of Canaan have a single name (וַאֲבֹדֹתָם אֶת־שֵׁמִם מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא)⁴⁵! On the surface, this seems to “fly in the face” of what is known about Canaanite religion. Here is just a partial list of the gods of Canaan⁴⁶:

Anat

Athirat

Atthart

Attar

Baalat (aka Baalit)

Ba'al Hadad

Ba'al Hammon

Dagon

Eshmun

Ishat

Kotharat

Kothar-wa-Khasis

Lotan

Marqod

Melqart

Molech

Mot (aka Mawat)

Nikkal-wa-Ib

Qadeshtu

⁴⁴ KJV; NKJV; NTL; NIV; HCSB; DBY; WEB

⁴⁵ http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Deu&c=12&t=ESV#s=t_conc_165003

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaanite_religion

Resheph

Shachar

Shalim

Shamayim

Shapash

Yam

Sydyk

Yarikh

Dozens of them and this is just a partial list. So either there's a mistake in the Torah, or somehow, all the different gods of Canaan actually have just one name. In this case, the latter is correct. As Yeshua said, not the smallest letter yod (י), or even the crowns on the letters of the Torah scroll will pass away until everything is fulfilled⁴⁷!

The key to how the different gods of Canaan all have just one name, is in Isaiah. In chapter 9, "[Messiah]'s **name** shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"⁴⁸. In chapter 7, his **name** will be called Immanuel⁴⁹. When Yeshua was a child and his friends came over, did they knock on the door and ask his mother Miriam (Mary): "*Can **Wonderful** come out and play?*" When he was older, working in the carpentry shop, would customers greet him in Spanish: "*Hola, Immanuel! Como estas?*" Immanu-el we know means "G-D with us"⁵⁰; like the other "names", it is a **creed**, a focused statement of WHO Messiah is.

We saw earlier Psalm 101:3: "I will not set before my eyes anything that is **worthless**"⁵¹. The Hebrew is: *I will not set before my eyes anything that is בְּלִיָּה־לִּי*. ("Blee-ya-al"⁵²) - **Belial**. You may recognize Belial as one of the names of HaSattan, The Enemy⁵³. There are many

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:18

⁴⁸ Verse 6, KJV

⁴⁹ Verse 14

⁵⁰ Strong's Concordance, words H410 and H6005

(<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H410&t=KJV>;
<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6005&t=KJV>)

⁵¹ My emphasis

⁵² <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H1100&t=KJV>

⁵³ 2 Corinthians 6:15

passages in the TaNaCh⁵⁴ (Hebrew Bible) where the children (sons and daughters) of בְּלִיעַל are mentioned⁵⁵. That would be a good study; to go through those passages and see what the child of G-D does **not** look like. But now we know how the gods of Canaan all had the same **name**, the same **creed** – בְּלִיעַל – worthless.

Let's pray

⁵⁴ An acronym of the 1st letters of the Hebrew words Torah (Pentateuch), N'vi'im (prophets) and Chetuvim (Writings)

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 19:22; Judges 20:13; 1 Samuel 1:16; 1 Samuel 2:12; 1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Samuel 25:17; 1 Samuel 25:25; 1 Samuel 30:22; 2 Samuel 16:7; 2 Samuel 20:1; 2 Samuel 23:6; 1 Kings 21:10; 1 Kings 21:13; 2 Chronicles 13:7