

I. **Reciprocal Grace: The Wisdom of Jewish Spiritual Direction**

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II. **AYEKA?** (Where Are You?) **HINEINI! HERE I AM** Gen 3:9 & 22:1

III. **Spiritual Guidance in the Hebrew Scriptures**

PRIEST – KOHEIN

Now Hannah prayed in her heart; only her lips moved, her voice unheard. Eli, thinking she was drunk, said, “How long will you make yourself a spectacle? Sober up!”-Hannah replied, “Oh no, my lord! I have been pouring out my heart to the Eternal....speaking out of my great anguish and distress.” “Then go in peace,” said Eli, “and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked.”

She answered, “You are most kind...” and was no longer downcast. *I Samuel 1*

In those days, the word of the LORD was rare; prophecy was not widespread. Once, Eli was asleep in his usual place... while Samuel slept in the temple near the Ark. The Eternal called Samuel, who answered, “I’m coming.” He ran to Eli, who said,, “I didn’t call you; go back to sleep....” When the Eternal called Samuel again, Eli understood... and said to Samuel, “Go lie down. If you’re called again, say, ‘Speak, O’ Eternal for Your servant is listening.’

I Samuel 3

PROPHET -- NAVI

God came to Abimelech in a night dream and said, “You shall die because the woman that you have taken is married.” Now Abimelech had not approached her. He said, “O lord... He said to me, ‘She’s my sister’! She said, ‘He’s my brother...’” And God replied, “I knew you did this with a blameless heart...That was why I did not let you touch her. Restore to the man his wife—since he is a prophet, he will intercede and pray for you *Genesis 20*

The child grew up. One day, he went among the reapers and suddenly cried to his father, “Oh, my head, my head!” He brought the boy to his mother; he sat on her lap until noon when he died. She laid him upon the prophet’s bed, left him and closed the door. She called to her husband: “Please, send me a servant and a donkey, so I can hurry to the prophet and back.” He said, “Why are you going today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath.” She answered, “It’s all right.” *II Kings 4*

IV. Cross-cultural Spiritual Guidance in the Hebrew Scriptures Melchizedek & Abraham / Jethro & Moses

And Melchizedek, King of Shalem, Priest of God Most High, brought bread and wine and blessed him, saying: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand.” And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything. Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizedek... blessed Abraham, recognizing in him God's partner, the first who could make the Divine Name known among humanity. In a demonstration of spiritual friendship, Melchizedek mentored Abraham in the laws of the priesthood and in Torah.

adapted from Louis Ginzberg Legends of the Jews 1:5 (1909)

Next day, Moses sat as magistrate... while the people stood about from morning until evening. But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do, Jethro said, “Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you awaiting judgement from dawn until dusk? ... The thing you're doing is not right... you will surely debase yourself and your people... Now listen to me. Let me counsel you, and may God be with you Exodus 18:13-19
(abridged)

V. Rabbinic Judaism and Spiritual Companionship

Joshua ben Peraḥiah used to say: appoint a teacher but acquire for yourself a companion... Ethics of the Fathers 1:6 (c. 200 CE)

... **acquire for yourself** a companion How so? This teaches that persons should each acquire a companion with whom they can eat and drink, contemplate Scripture and study Rabbinic Wisdom, with whom they can share everything, including secrets of Torah and worldly confidences.

Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan 8 (c.700–900 CE)

Acquire a companion for yourself, even if it is costly to do so, and you must spend liberally... Ovadia of Bartenura (Italy, 15th century)

VI.

MASHGIAH -- BEING ATTENTIVE

Are the utensils of one ignorant of the Law [am ha-aretz] presumed pure or impure? Rabbi Joshua replied, "Impure ... but if you tell him so, will he pay attention [*hamashgiaḥ*] to you? He'll reply, 'Mine are pure; yours are impure'" BT Hagigah 22b.

Rabbi Nathan said, "It [the verse "He has despised God's word"] applies to those who pay no attention [*mashgiaḥ*] to the Mishna..." BT Sanhedrin 99a

... **examine those opinions** that strengthen the heart's trust in God. First... know that God shows mercy to humanity beyond that shown by another comforter. God pays attention [*mashgiaḥ*] to humanity in both hidden and revealed ways

Orchot Tzadikim [The Saints' Ways], Gate 9 Germany, 15th century.

How does one acquire Reverence? By contemplating two truths: first, the blessed Shechinah [Divine Presence] is found everywhere and pays attention [*mashgiaḥ*] to all things small and great. Nothing is hidden from God's eyes.

M H Luzzato, *Mesilat Yesharim [The Path of the Upright] 25: Italy, 18th century.*

VII.

MASHPIA – CHANNELING WHOLENESS

It is the way of the Blessed One to convey [*lihashpia*] wholeness.... And permission is given to those who receive it to do as they please. What do the righteous do? They channel [*mashpia*] that goodness to others

The Eternity of Israel [Netzah Yisrael], 25 Judah Loew of Prague, 16th Century.

Therefore, Torah was given exclusively to Moses who, because of his generous spirit, was a channel [*mashpia*] to others. Thereby Moses conveyed [*lihashpia*] Torah's guidance to Israel exactly as its psyche needed

The Splendor of Israel [Tiferet Yisrael], 49). Judah Loew

VIII. ACTUALIZING OTHERS, SHAPING REVELATION, TOUCHING GOD

Those who receive the greatest wholeness do so by acting as channels [*mashpia*] for others, actualizing them, their Torah and bringing them to supernal wholeness.... When one channels Torah to another, it represents something new, as if the channel [*mashpia*] had personally fashioned it, thereby touching the Divine Intellect to convey to and actualize another. In this way, a person actualizes complete wholeness unlike anything that could be attained on one's own Judah Loew *Eternal Pathways [Netivot Olam], 7 and 8*

IX. In It for God... Untying the Knots

Sy, had endured years of dysfunctional marriage to a gambling addict. He moved from his home and began divorce proceedings. Having shielded his teenage children from their mother's addiction, Sy bore the brunt of their anger over the breakup. In spiritual direction, Sy spoke of his hurt and his attempts to rebuild his life. He described acting as a divorced friend's escort to her son's graduation party. While he played no role in the demise of his date's marriage the graduate's father, a long-time acquaintance, cavalierly rebuffed Sy's greetings. Caught in the web of small-town life, Sy lamented his rather "knotty situation." When asked about his feelings, Sy was finally able to access his profound sense of hurt and loss. He sensed God's presence with him as he walked in this Valley of the Shadow, his old life dying, his new life yet to be born. When asked where he might have been for God during his transition, Sy's mood lifted. Perhaps his overture to the graduate's father might have been more than a pleasantry; it might have been a godly, liberating act. "Who knows? Maybe my greeting helped begin God's process of loosening the knots that are so painfully binding us to each other."

X. OFFER STRENGTH TO GOD Psalms 68:35

...because the human is created in the image of God, human actions channel (*MASHPIA*) additional divine radiant energy (*SHEPHA*) to the Supernal (worlds) that are configured according to that same likeness.

Isaiah Horowitz Prague, 17th Century *Conceptual Keys (Mafteichot Lalnyanim)*

XI. JOINING SHECHINAH... SILVER TRUMPETS... HALF FORMS

When you are embattled, sound short trumpet blasts; you'll be remembered before God and be delivered Numbers 10:9

Through the Trumpets (*Hatzotzorot*) sound you should help to re-member the twin half-forms (*Hatzi Tzurot*). Embrace *Shechinah* (Immanent, Feminine Divine Presence) and recognize that your travails are Hers. (As it were) there is a split in the Supernal Realm; the Divine moans with longing to reunite, the One (the Cosmic Creator) with the Other (the Bride Shechinah). If you act in Truth, "you will be re-membered amid the Eternal, your God; this is the deliverance from woe."

M H Ephraim (18th Century Sudylkow) *Degel Maḥaneh Ephraim (Ephraim's Tribal Flag) B'ha• alotkha*

XII. What God asks...

The holy book *Yesod Ha Avodah* (The Foundation of Service) attributes the following teaching to the *Ari z'l* (Isaac Luria, Safed 16th Century):

Since time began no day or hour that has ever existed can be compared to any other In the same way, no human being can be compared to another since Creation, and no one can do the Cosmic repair (tikkun) of one's fellow as determined by the season, the hour, and one's unique soul code.

These words lay the important groundwork for us to find our task in the world. We need extreme clarity to discern *et asher HaShem Elohekha sho-el mei-imkha*, exactly what God asks of us, and what path is ours. It is according to the unique roots of our souls and our personal tendencies, combined with the specific era and situation in which we find ourselves, that we can draw near to God. If we lack personal responsibility for our world or lose touch with our life's task and purpose, we become like travelers lost along the way, unable to find our destination, never reaching our goal.

First, one needs to meditate well and dig deeply to learn what one's special task is. We are given signs by which to discern it; sometimes we know it because it is the most difficult thing we could ever undertake...But when we have clarity about *shliḥuto alei admot*, our special earthly mission through which we fulfill ourselves, we are no longer confused nor equivocate about the amount of energy we must invest in this great work. We do not lose hope in life, because we are guided and fulfilled by our soul's purpose and no sacrifice is too precious to carry it out..."

S N Berezovsky *Netivot Shalom (Pathways of Peace) Netivei Daat (Paths of Awareness)*: Ch 6

adapted from the translation by R' Tirzah Firestone.

XIII. What Does this Text Evoke in You?

At this moment in your life, at this challenging moment in history, reflect on your unique gifts, your personal tendencies, on what might be the 'roots of your soul...'

- **What might be God's call to you for repair?**
- **Do you notice any resistance?**
- **Can you talk with God about that resistance?**

Pray about it?

Take a few minutes by yourself... Then you are invited to turn to someone close by and share what has come up for you.