

02-06-26 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Yitro* (abundance)
Torah Portion; Exodus 18:1-20
Haftarah: Isaiah 6:1 – 7:6, 9:6-7
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Matt 7:15-23

Demonic Deception – Part 2 – False Prophets

Central question of this message: How can we identify a false prophet?

This is parasha *Yitro*, referring to the main character in the opening lines, being Yitro (or as he is commonly known in English today, Jethro). That name suggests abundance. Its name comes from the second word in the English and the second word in the Hebrew.

Ex 18:1-5

18 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 4 And the other was named Eliezer, for he

said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

עָשָׂה	אֲשֶׁר	כָּל־	אֵת	מֹשֶׁה	חַתָּן	מִדְיָן	כֹּהֵן	יִתְרוֹ	וַיִּשְׁמָע	18:1
had done	that	all		Moses'	father in law,	Midian,	the priest of	Jethro,	When heard of	
6213	834	3605	853	4872	2859	4080	3548	3503	8085	
יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶת־	יְהוָה	הוֹצִיא	כִּי־	וְעַמּוֹ	וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל	לְמֹשֶׁה	אֱלֹהִים		
Israel		the Lord	had brought	that	and his people,	and for Israel	for Moses,	God		
3478	853	3068	3318	3588	9999	5971	3478	4872	430	
									מִמִּצְרַיִם:	
									out of Egypt;	
									4714	
שְׁלוּחָהּ:	אַחֲרַי	מֹשֶׁה	אִשְׁתּוֹ	צִפּוֹרָה	אֶת־	מֹשֶׁה	חַתָּן	יִתְרוֹ	וַיִּקַּח	2
he had sent her back,	after	Moses'	wife,	Zipporah,		Moses'	father in law,	Jethro,	Then took	
7964	310	4872	802	6855	853	4872	2859	3503	3947	
גֵּר	אָמַר	כִּי	גֵרְשֹׁם	הָאֶחָד	שֵׁם	אֲשֶׁר	בְּנֵיהֶם	שְׁנֵי	וְאֵת	3
an alien	he said,	for	Gershom;	was	the name of	which	of her sons;	two	And	
1616	559	3588	1647	9999	259	8034	834	9999	1121	
									נִכְרִיָּה:	
									strange	
									5237	
									בְּאֶרֶץ	
									in a land:	
									776	
									הָיִיתִי	
									I have been	
									1961	
בְּעֻזִּי	אָבִי	אֱלֹהִי	כִּי־	אֵלִיעֶזֶר	הָאֲחֵר	וְשֵׁם				4
mine help,	said he, was	my father,	the God of	for	Eliezer;	was	the other	And the name of		
5828	9999	1	430	3588	461	9999	259	8034		
									וַיַּצִּלֵּנִי	
									and delivered me	
									Pharaoh:	
									6547	
									מִחֶרֶב	
									from the sword of	
									2719	
									5337	

Part of demonic deception is found when there are people among us who say they represent G-d, and speak for Him to issues in our lives, but are in fact false prophets.

Those who oppose G-d in this way may not be demons themselves, nor even inhabited by demons, but they may be *influenced by* demons.

Regardless, the end result is the same – drawing people away from G-d and away from listening to His chosen servants.

There are some notable examples found in Scripture of such demonic influence.

We find the first warning in Torah regarding false prophets which we would encounter in our wanderings. He told us not to be like the nations we would encounter.

Deut 18:14-22

14 "For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so. 15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the Lord said to me, 'They have spoken well. 18 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 'And it

shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 'But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' 21 "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' 22 "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

But demonic deception would even arise from right within our people.

Num 12:1-11

12 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); 2 and they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the Lord heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.) 4 And suddenly the Lord said to Moses and Aaron and

to Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out. 5 Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward, 6 He said,

"Hear now My words:

If there is a prophet among you,

I, the Lord, shall make Myself known to him in a vision.

I shall speak with him in a dream.

7 "Not so, with My servant Moses,

He is faithful in all My household;

8 With him I speak mouth to mouth,

Even openly, and not in dark sayings,

And he beholds the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid

To speak against My servant, against Moses?"

9 So the anger of the Lord burned against them and He

departed. 10 But when the cloud had withdrawn from over

the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. As

Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous

[actually, she had *tzarat*, not leprosy].

Who, in this context, were the false prophets? Aaron and Miriam. They were speaking against Moses, for sure, but beyond that they were presuming to be spokespersons for G-d, just like Moses. And they had not been selected by G-d to be such a prophet.

G-d gave us many warnings about this kind of deception.

Deut 13:1-5

13 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ' Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4 You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.** 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and

redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

So you can see in general terms what a false prophet is attempting to do among the faithful. If that person causes you to do any of the following things, you are to kill him and purge the evil from among the assembly:

1. Stop following the L-rd. (Did G-d really say?)
2. Stop fearing the L-rd (not giving supreme reference to all that He is)
3. Stop keeping any of His commandments (meaning *all* His commandments)
4. Stop listening to His voice. (begin by knowing Scripture, and do listen to the *right* spirit)
5. Stop serving Him (not doing what the Spirit tells you to do)
6. Stop clinging to Him (stop relying on Him, but relying upon yourself, or another thing that you elevate over G-d).

These elements of deception were still evident because demons were still hard at work, even among Yeshua's closest followers. One of them listened to the wrong spirit, and advocated that Yeshua turn away from what He needed to do for the redemption of us all.

Matt 16:21-23

21 From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Even those who walked daily with the Messiah were subject to being deceived. Knowing that, it is no wonder that all of us are subject to deceit as well.

On the other side of the coin, a legitimate spokesman for G-d can find himself to be considered to be of no value among those who know him best.

Matt 13:53-58

53 And it came about that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. 54 And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers? 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household." 58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Paul stated that since his teachings were inspired by G-d, then anyone in the congregation who says differently, is certainly not a prophet.

1 Cor 14:37-38

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. 38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

In one important instance, when a false prophet was confronted by Paul, a punishment from heaven came upon that false prophet immediately.

Acts 13:1-12

13 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. 6 And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear

the word of God. 8 But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, 10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

Yeshua warned us further about false prophets, who would come to us just as harmless as Satan appeared to Eve in the Garden. And He gave us a reminder of the test given by Moses, but only this time in general terms. And then He differentiates those who claim to be prophets, but are not legitimate, from those whose lives are consistent with Torah, and are worthy of speaking for Him.

Matt 7:15-23

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

Peter also warned of false prophets, engaging in deception. Their eternal punishment is assured, just as it was in ages past.

2 Peter 1:20-2:10

20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he

saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.

Paul gave a warning to his flocks regarding demonic deception that was coming.

Acts 20:28-31

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

These warnings are relevant and should carry weight with congregational leaders to this day.

Are there false prophets under deception by demons in this age? I believe if we are vigilant, we will most certainly encounter personally – or see on the airwaves – one or more examples of demonic deception and false prophecy.

How do we recognize demonic deception? Scripture gives us some guidance.

TEST THE SPIRITS

1 John 4:1-6

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from

the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

IS THE WORD GIVEN CONSISTENT WITH SCRIPTURE?

2 Tim 3:14-17

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

If the word given contradicts any of Scripture, in particular Torah, then that word is laced with deception and should be disregarded, and possibly even called out publicly. At the time this passage was written to Timothy,

the word “Scripture” was well-known and understood to refer specifically to Torah.

Gal 1:6-10

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

IS THE SPEAKER’S LIFE CONSISTENT WITH HOLINESS?

We already know that “by their fruits they shall be known.” (Mat 7:16) But there is more understanding of what kind of fruit is coming from a holy person.

Gal 5:22-24

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control;
against such things there is no law.

If a person seeks to influence others in the congregation, and his life is not reflecting these kinds of fruits, then he most certainly cannot be a true prophet.

It is axiomatic that no person can be a legitimate prophet while living a life of rebellion against G-d and His ways.

THE SPEAKER PROMOTES HIMSELF MORE THAN G-D

We do not need to search too far to find examples of believers who have exalted themselves or their particular ministry. It seems to be their name that is featured, and not the power and glory of G-d. The Scriptures speak against pride in many passages.

Ps 75:4-5

4 "I said to the boastful, 'Do not boast,'
And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn;
5 Do not lift up your horn on high,

Do not speak with insolent pride."

Prov 11:2-3

2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor,

But with the humble is wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright will guide them,

But the falseness of the treacherous will destroy them

Yeshua gave us a listing of the kinds of things that are defiling in any person.

Mark 7:20-23

20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

A person whose life is characterized by these kinds of things are certainly not worthy of consideration as a spokesman for G-d.

I have seen what seems to be a contest between pastors in some areas to pull around their own shoulders mantles of higher and higher honor, so that they can be regarded as above other pastors in their area.

I have seen a Pastor begin using the title “Bishop” at that seems to be an indication to me that he is only seeking higher honor with his peers. Then the next time I saw him a year later, he was already calling himself “Apostle” for what appeared to me to be for the same reason. Then, it became “Prophet.” In the final analysis, I now must question whether this man is even qualified to be a Pastor.

As I read the historical records of the prophets in Scripture, I have never seen one of them pull that mantle around their own shoulders. In fact, most very reluctantly accepted that calling, even after being confronted by G-d personally. One even fled on a ship to try to avoid his calling.

When I encounter someone who gratuitously calls themselves a “prophet,” I am very tempted to ask them a question or two about their prophecies. “Have you ever said anything that did not come to pass?” No matter how they answer, they will likely be condemned. If they say they have always been accurate, I suspect they are lying because their pride is

stronger than their honesty. If they say they have on occasion not been accurate, then that is a bigger problem. “Well, since you as a prophet are judged by your accuracy, when you get it wrong we are supposed to kill you to remove the evil from among us.”

Just so you know, one who comes into our congregation and claims to be a prophet will be closely tested. And we all should exercise diligence to be certain that we don't fall victim to such people or their teachings.