

וַיֵּצֵא

Vayyetzei

(and departed)

B'reshit [Genesis] 28:10-32:3

In English Bibles – Genesis 28:10-32:2

Divination or Discernment?

B'reshit (Genesis) 30:27

And Lavan said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, stay; for I have divined that YHWH has blessed me for your sake."

Ya'aqov's father-in-law tells him that he was able to use divination to find out that YHWH was blessing him because of Ya'aqov. This statement tells us a lot about Lavan and how he lived. We will examine this to see how this can help us today.

The Hebrew word that is translated as "divined" in the above passage of Scripture is נִחַשְׁתִּי – ni-chash-ti, which means "to hiss"; i.e., "to whisper a spell." This is the piel stem of the root word, נָחַשׁ – "nachash," meaning that the action is intensified, indicating that instead of just hissing, Lavan spoke a spell in order to bring this knowledge to him that he was relating to Ya'aqov.

One of the interesting things to note about this word, נָחַשׁ is that, although it means to hiss, it can also mean "snake" or "dragon." Thus, we find the association between sorcery and Satan is very intimately tied to the craft of witchcraft, sorcery, and those things considered magic.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 18:10

"There shall not be found with you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that uses divination, one that practices augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer."

YHWH forbids any of His people to practice any of those things that uses divination or spells of any kind. To do this is to break His Torah.

The question that this brings to our mind is: just exactly what is divination and how does it differ from discernment?

When a person uses any type of divination, then he is seeking forbidden knowledge from a source that is outside the commanded means of gaining knowledge; i.e., that it is separate from seeking to know something through YHWH.

There are many types of divination used today. For example, if one were to seek knowledge from a person who used a crystal ball or tarot cards, or one who reads palms or tells one's fortune or future, then this knowledge is forbidden according to YHWH. But there are many other types of gurus in our world today that actually divine, but are not often seen as being diviners of knowledge. For example, many of those on Wall Street or having to do with high finance in some way often are referred to as gurus, but are not seen for the anti-Torah way of life that it is.

Divination is seeking knowledge using any means that pushes YHWH out and ignores His commandments. Divination is the means that many people use to gain that which they would not otherwise have or be entitled to; particularly it is used for personal gain.

In our Torah portion this week we find Lavan divining the reason why he was being blessed. Did he instinctively know that he was not worthy to have been receiving these manifold blessings? Perhaps this is why he turned to divination. What he discovered was that he was being blessed because of the presence of Ya'aqov. It was actually Ya'aqov who was being blessed. Lavan was simply benefiting from these blessings because Ya'aqov worked for him.

Divination is often, if not always, tied to one's personal gain; whereas discernment is not tied to personal gain, but rather discernment is dealing with truth, particularly the truth of YHWH.

Malachi 3:18

Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves Elohim and him that serves him not.

Please note that when we return to YHWH to serve Him, then we will be able to discern between what is righteous and what is wicked in His eyes. Here is what we need to understand at this point. Discernment is dealing with His truth. It is being able to tell the difference between what is wicked and what is righteous according to what YHWH says.

Whereas, divination is eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it is determining what is right and what is wrong according to sources outside of YHWH and His Torah. It is when one realizes what is the source of the knowledge, and the intent of why one desires that knowledge, that will help one to see whether it is divination or discernment that is being used.

Ivrim (Hebrews) 5:14

But solid food is for the mature, even those who by reason of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

In the above passage the word “discern” is translated from the Hebrew word בִּינ – biyn (beane), which means to discern, understand, consider, to perceive, know (with the mind), to observe, mark, give heed to, distinguish, and insight. We find this same word in the following verse.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:6

“Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”

In the passage above those words which are underlined are both a form of the word בִּינ – biyn. When we choose to keep and obey His Torah, then we will be a wise and understanding people. We will be a people with true discernment. When we do not keep and obey His Torah, then we will not have wisdom or understanding, for true wisdom is based upon one’s obedience to His Voice.

Mishle (Proverbs) 28:7

***Whoever keeps the Torah is a wise son;
But he that is a companion of the riotous shames his father.***

This proverb tells us that whoever chooses to keep and guard the Torah of YHWH is truly a wise son. However, the son who runs with those who are riotous and do not control their own desires brings shame to his own father. He brings shame first to his earthly father and secondly he brings shame to his heavenly Father.

Dani’el 12:10

Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand.

Dani’el in speaking about the latter days teaches us that those who act wickedly will continue to act in a wicked manner and will have no understanding. However, those who are wise will understand or as we have seen from the meaning of this verse they will have discernment. And let us not forget that to be wise as we have seen above means that one is keeping and guarding His Torah with all one’s heart, being and possessions.

Romans 1:22

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

This passage teaches us that those who do not acknowledge YHWH as Elohim will become fools, regardless of what knowledge or understanding that they think that they possess; it will all come to naught and they will be seen as fools.

Philippians 1:9-11

9 And this is my prayer; that your love may more and more overflow in fullness of knowledge and depth of discernment,

10 so that you will be able to determine what is best and thus be pure and without blame for the Day of the Mashiach,

11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Yeshua the Mashiach to the glory and praise of Elohim.

In Shaul's praying for the brethren at Philippi, he prayed that their discernment would be overflowing with love so that they would be without blame on the day of Mashiach Yeshua's return. What a wonderful prayer that Shaul blessed these talmidim of Yeshua with. Perhaps we should take these three verses which Shaul prayed for the talmidim in Philippi and pray these for one another. It sure would be a blessing to know that someone was praying such a prayer for me! What about you?

ABBA YHWH, please give us true discernment and understanding as we learn to walk in the fullness of Your ways; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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