WORD STUDY – THE WRONG ROAD

Hosea 14:9: “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”

The Talmud teaches that the Torah is comprised of two aspects – spirit and matter, revelation and concealment, the Tree of Life and the Tree of knowledge. In Yoma 72b the Talmud states: “if a person is unworthy, the Torah becomes a potion of death for him; if he is worthy it is a portion of life. A comparison is drawn between Abraham who, in his old age, was blessed with everything (Genesis 24:1) and Solomon in his old age was turned away from God by his many wives (I Kings 11:4).

Solomon was wise. The word for wise in Hebrew is hakem. In its Semitic root hakem means to join yourself with God so that He will fill your heart with hidden knowledge. Indeed this pictures Solomon. Yet, wisdom was not enough, he had to understand. The word is Hebrew for understand is byin. Byin has the idea of intelligence and discernment. Solomon had wisdom, but he lacked discernment when it came to women. Abraham, did not have that much wisdom. You find an example of that when he suggested to Sarah that she tell the king she was his sister, but he had discernment. Because he used discernment, he was blessed in everything he did. The them in this verse that is used three times refers to the laws of God or His Torah. The chapter discusses the blessings that come from a return to the law of God and obedience to God.

So if you are wise (hakem) you should byim (discern the law) and then when you discern what is the law of God you should
know. The Hebrew word used for know is yada which is an intimate knowing, it is becoming intimate with the laws of God. The upright is the word tsadikim which mean the righteous will walk in the law. The word walk is yalak and not the word you would expect which is halakah which is a righteous walk. Yalak is a walk that is following a path. In other words the righteous will follow the path that is laid out in the law of God. But the transgressors (pasha’) will stumble (kashal) in them. Psaha which the KJV renders as transgressors means one who is in rebellion or rebels. Those who rebel against God’s law will stumble. The word in Hebrew for stumble is kashal which has the idea of becoming spiritually feeble. In its Semitic root kasal is a heart filled with corruption and empty prayers. For the sake of simplicity, let us just say the law represents the ten commandments.

Some time again a former president tried to say he did not commit adultery because he did not share a physical intimacy with a woman. Yet, Jesus said that if a man looks upon a woman to lust he has already committed adultery in his heart (Matthew 5:28). In other words, your heart will tell you the true nature of the laws of God (Jeremiah 31:33), but if you rebel against them, you will not have byim or understanding of the law and you will end up like Solomon having his head turned away from God without even realizing it. How could the wisest man in the world end his life having turned away from God? He rebelled against the law of God to not take any foreign wives. That act of rebellion caused his heart to kashal (stumble or grow feeble) such that without realizing it he had fallen away from God.

The whole chapter of Hosea 14 talks of turning back to God and how He is more than ready to accept us when we turn back
to Him. Yet, how can you turn back to something that you don’t even realize you’ve turned away from? That is one of the weapons the enemy uses against us, taking away our *byin* (*understanding*) by filling us with pasha (*rebellion*). The law is our schoolmaster as Paul pointed out in Galatians 3:24. Many times as I travel I will make a wrong turn and travel miles before I realize I am on the wrong road. Until I purchased a GPS system I had to look on my map from Mapquest to discover that I was on the wrong road and then I had to find out how to get back on the right road. So too, the Bible is our road map which will not only tell us when we have taken a wrong turn but how to get back on the right road. The law will not save us but it is there to instruct us as to when we have taken the wrong road that leads away from God. And when we have taken a wrong road it is there to show us what road to take to get back on the right *yalak* (*road or path*).