



USING THE BIBLE AS A GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with four significant ideas woven together. First is the idea that there is such a thing as Spiritual Development, and that it follows a pattern. The second idea is that there is a difference between Spiritual Development and development as a Medium. A third idea is that the consciousness of humanity has evolved over time. The last idea is that the Bible provides a road map, a sort of "developmental Spirituality" which can be used by us as a navigational aid.

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Using the Bible as a Guide to Developmental Spirituality

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Premises

This paper deals with four significant ideas woven together. First is the idea that there is such a thing as Spiritual Development, and that it follows a pattern. Piaget pointed out that children develop according to a certain pattern, which we now call developmental Psychology. Every child does not develop according to this pattern, but most do. Similarly, most people will develop spiritually according to a specific pattern. There is a difference. Conscious choice determines the speed of the development. In fact, it is a conscious decision whether to move beyond a specific point. While there may be several methods for making spiritual progress, the pattern of inner development remains relatively constant.

The second idea is that there is a difference between Spiritual Development and development as a Medium. We all know mediums who are not particularly developed spiritually and spiritual people who are not particularly adept as mediums. Mediumship is first and foremost a gift, but once we have the gift, our improvements become skills. (*Once we are aware of the gift, then we develop the skills to utilize the gift.*) Mediumship is about something we do. As we develop further, we are improving a skill. Spiritual Development is about who we are. It is about our state of being. For our purposes here, we define Spiritual Development as it says in the 'Course in Miracles,' as "removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence."

A third idea is that the consciousness of humanity has evolved over time. The consciousness of Adam is not the consciousness of today. Our experience and perceptions are significantly different. However, in a modified form, we pass through the consciousness of those who have gone before us. Notice that the average ten-year-old is far more computer aware than we are, even though we may have used computers before they were born.

The last idea is that the Bible provides a road map, a sort of “developmental Spirituality” which can be used by us as a navigational aid. This is not a tool for use in judging ourselves harshly, or judging the development of others. Many of the phases seem to repeat on different levels, we may be wandering in the desert in our relationship with our children, and at the same time we are being crucified at work, and at the same time, we are being greeted like King David by our significant other.

Ultimately, all of our lessons are about power, and the goal is to use power appropriately. This manifests in our relationships with others. The goal is the appropriate use of power in our relationships with others is to keep the power in balance, where we are neither the king nor the peasant; neither the victor nor the vanquished; neither the prisoner nor the jailer.

Eden and the Creation of Ego

It doesn't really matter much to me whether God created the world in six days or sixty million years. To me the important point is that we are here. So it is that we begin with Adam and Eve, already here:

Ge 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Ge 3:2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

Ge 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Ge 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Ge 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Ge 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Ge 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Ge 3:8 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

Ge 3:9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

Ge 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Ge 3:11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

Ge 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Ge 3:13 And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Ge 3:14 And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

Ge 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Ge 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Ge 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Ge 3:18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

Ge 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Ge 3:20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

Ge 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Ge 3:22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

Ge 3:23 Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

Ge 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

This story operates on several levels. On the face of things, the serpent lies, and causes Adam and Eve to disobey God, who punishes them. However, take another look. The serpent didn't lie. Everything the serpent said was true. Adam and Eve instantly gained the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They did not die as a result of eating the fruit. What they did, however, was use the knowledge as soon as it was available. They began judging. They decided that they were naked and that this was bad. They hid themselves. When God showed up, they judged that they had done something wrong. Each judged themselves as having done something which would cause God to stop loving them. So, when God asked them if they had eaten the Forbidden Fruit, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve in turn blamed the serpent.

Why did they do this? The first person Adam judged was Adam. He knew he was bad. The first person Eve judged was Eve. She knew she was bad. Each blamed another to lessen his shame. It didn't work.

Physically, at about age two, our brain makes certain connections, an organ called the Corpus Callosum Myelinates, connecting our right and left hemispheres. At this time, the hemispheres begin to swap information and perform specialized functions. It is during this time that we find it possible to potty train our children. We can potty train our children because they now have the Knowledge of Good and Evil. (No, it is at this time that they begin to learn and we in turn share the fruit of knowledge with them.)

Our children then judge themselves. They cannot live up to adult standards. As soon as they fail to live up to adult standards, they judge themselves and begin to blame others. Some are more effective than others at doing this. Either way, the Ego has been formed.

For the most part, spiritual teaching considers the Ego to be the enemy. In a sense it is. However, it is also a positive and necessary

function in our physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. We have heard the criticism, "He doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain." "I'm wet," is a perception. "I am wet but would rather be dry, and can do something about it," requires more than one judgment. The purpose of Ego is judgment. Everything is viewed in a binary fashion. Things are Good or Evil; Right or Wrong; Positive or Negative; Yes or No. It becomes a very complicated pattern. Consider that computer and digital television are based upon such a sequence. The Garden of Eden is a state of innocence which cannot be maintained once the Ego appears. Note that before they left, God clothed them. Good was not being vindictive. Once Adam and Eve had the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Eden ceased to exist for them.

In Eden, everything was perfect because Adam and Eve didn't have the capacity to know the difference. Were Adam and Eve punished by death, or did they come to recognize that it occurs and judge that it was bad? Did God cause Eve to suffer during childbirth, or did she suddenly have the ability to judge that she didn't like the pain. Maybe it was that she knew in advance that it was coming, and that she didn't like it.

It says: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." The Cherubim and flaming sword are the egos of Adam and Eve, based upon the Knowledge of Good and Evil, telling them and us that we can never go back again. We can only go forward.

Consider that the Garden of Eden and we began as spirit. Moving forward, this would entail that the tree of knowledge was of a spiritual nature and for partaking that knowledge caused us to become physical. The Tree of Life is also of a spiritual nature. Now we have a barrier set by the Sword of Truth and the Cherubim. It is not that we should return to a state of innocence, rather we should return to a state of spirituality. The clothing was symbolic of a physical nature that we placed upon ourselves. God granted the wisdom from the knowledge.

Genesis After Adam

After Adam, Cain kills Able and is exiled. Humanity is showing

itself at its finest.

It is not humanity at its finest, rather it is that of a child's first lesson. We are naturally greedy about our belongings and are not at the point of awareness that we are nurturing and sharing. A child takes before giving.

It is interesting to note that, even before Noah, there was an example of advanced Spiritual development.

Ge 5:18 And Jared lived a hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch:

Ge 5:19 And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

Ge 5:20 And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

Ge 5:21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

Ge 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

Ge 5:23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

Ge 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

While this is all that is said about Enoch in the Bible, there is a book of Enoch, which is not included in the Bible, but which is interesting to read. According to the Book of Jasher, which is also not included in the Bible, Cain was Enoch's father, and Lamech was Methuselah's father. According to the Book of Enoch, Enoch would spend large amounts of time with God, and when he returned to the world, people would ask him where he had been. No one seemed to be surprised.

The point is that Enoch didn't die. He went directly to be with God. So, while humanity is in the infancy, there is an example of possible development. Both Enoch and the story of Noah mention a problem with Giants. This is in part why God decides to end the experiment. But God then discovers Noah, and relents, allowing the best of the race to survive. The Flood is recorded in Gneiss chapters 6-9.

It is interesting that the savior of the race (this is the cream of humanity) is also the first alcoholic. The flaws of Noah are as large as his deeds. His son Ham sees Noah naked, which upsets Noah. So,

Noah, of course, in true alcoholic fashion, punishes Canaan, Ham's descendants. This seems to be the first recorded example of conflict avoidance.

This is actually the set up for what is to come, because the "Promised Land" of the Bible is the "Land of Canaan," i.e. the land of the descendants of Canaan. Abraham is the descendant (by 10 generations) of Shem. Canaan's descendants include the Jebusites, Amorites, and the Sinites.

Anyway, God gives Noah the keys to the store and Noah spends the rest of the weekend in the candy aisle!

What we are watching is a descent of Spirit into matter. This is the point where we become of the earth, not just in it. Everything which survives the flood is carried inside Noah's Ark. Developmentally, we move into internalization. We have a perceptual apparatus which only recognizes what our Ego selects. This is very well known. This was initially designed to help sort out important stimuli from unimportant stimuli. Except that Ego has taken over the selection process. From Adam to Noah, humanity was a resident of God's planet. From Noah on, God is a visitor in humanity's planet. The visits become less common.

God walks with Abram (Abraham) and either he or his angels appear to Sarai, Hagar, Isaac, and Abram's nephew Lot. The angels who visit Lot in Sodom are seen by the residents therein, who want to gang rape them. So, God destroys Sodom.

Pentateuch

Isaac's son, Jacob not only sees God, but wrestles with him and is given the name Israel. After that, however, Jacob does not see God again. God speaks to him again many years later and tells him not to be afraid of going to Egypt. God does not appear to Joseph, although his connection to Spirit helps him interpret dreams.

God seems to have been absent for the entire time of the Egyptian captivity. He does not reappear until He speaks to Moses through the burning bush. (*The Hebrews were not taken into captivity. They were enslaved because the Egyptians feared their numbers.*)

For us as individuals, the descent into matter continues through our teenage years. The teenage years mark a time when we are in the exile of our peer group. We move into the hive mind of the teenager and reject our family of origin to become more like our peers. We remove ourselves from the first bondage to become individuals. We break away from our birth families. Often, we become very much like them. WE restore our identity as a function of age. The Israelites had a more difficult time.

Again, this is important to our spiritual development, because we move into the material world so that we can return it to God, as part of who we are.

With Exodus, we have a story about how difficult it is to break away from Egypt. For us, this is when we break away not only from our peer group, but from our family, in a greater way to become independent members of Society, just as Israel was becoming an independent nation. The Israelites spent forty years wandering in the desert, feeling their way back to Canaan. There is a lengthy struggle here. For the Israelites, it took an entire generation for enough people to die off so that slave thinking could be forgotten. It was only then that they could take their place among the nations of the earth. *(If one refers to Deuteronomy 1: 19-46 you will note that when God commanded the people to take the land of Amorites, the people balked. They instead sent foot runners to survey the land and hearing their report of the stature and multitude of the peoples they spoke against the Lord. Angered, God then told them that not one of this generation shall possess the land. Only those who did not yet know the difference between good and evil shall possess it. This had nothing to do with slave thinking.)*

Ex 19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus, shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

Ex 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Ex 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

Ex 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Ex 19:7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people

and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

Ex 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

Ex 19:9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

So, God delivers proof, and the Israelites hear his voice, and then:

Ex 20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

Ex 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Ex 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

Ex 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

Not only have they not heard from God in 400 years, most of them don't want to! Moses becomes the leader and the prophet and the law giver. Moses goes up the mountain to get the Law from God. We all know the story. The first time Moses goes up, he comes down :

Ex 32:21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

Ex 32:22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

Ex 32:23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex 32:24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Ex 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

During childhood, we engage in “magic thinking.” Later, we stop doing this, although some continue more than others. An example of magic thinking is Aaron’s explanation of the golden calf. It just jumped out of the fire. Moses knows better but doesn’t confront him on that point because there is no use. When they are exposed, they are in a sense naked, and ashamed because they think everyone can see their foolishness.

So, Moses goes back up the mountain for a second set of Commandments. One of the Laws God writes on the stone tablets is as follows:

Ex 34:10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Ex 34:11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Ex 34:12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

Ex 34:13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

Ex 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Ex 34:15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a-whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

Ex 34:16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a-whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a-whoring after their gods.

The books of Moses are not sequential. In Numbers, a Midianite Medium in the Desert, Balaam, gives the following message to Balak, a prince of the Midianites:

Nu 23:18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

Nu 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

(Another translation translates "parable" as "theme.") He later tells Balak:

Nu 24:3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

Nu 24:4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

Nu 24:5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

Nu 24:6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.

Nu 24:7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

Nu 24:8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.

Nu 24:9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

At about the same time, a plague is brewing:

Nu 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

Nu 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

Nu 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

Nu 25:4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

Nu 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye everyone his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

Nu 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Nu 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the

congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;
Nu 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

This is a time when the Mosaic Law is given. For us, developmentally, it is a time when we try to figure out how the world works. We find the Natural Law, though we know it doesn't work the way we thought it would.

For a teenager, laws and rules are very important. They are fascinated with them and like to twist them so they can use the law to break the law.

After Moses receives the Law:

Ex 34:28 And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Ex 34:29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

Ex 34:30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

Ex 34:31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

Ex 34:32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

Ex 34:33 And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Ex 34:34 But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

This veil, and Moses shining, are significant. We will remember the description of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The importance of this is that Moses has transfigured in the same way. This shining is often portrayed as a halo in much of the older art. The shining is because

Moses is emitting light. This is often called a Light Body and is extremely rare. This is another example of the extreme spiritual advancement, which is separate from the story of the Israelites, who are at the point of teenage rebellion and young adulthood.

So, the Arc of the Covenant is built, and the temple laws are written, as are all the other laws. A civilization is being created; A religion is being created. The bargain at this time is: God, gives enough rules to follow, so I will know when I am alright." The laws are given, and religion is created. Remember what God's plan is:

Ex 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

The point of rigid adherence to rules is where many people stay for their entire lives. Most people want to follow the rules, so they don't have to decide how to live. They can pursue the ways of the world without worrying about God. Finally, the Israelites enter the promised land, where they intend to live happily ever after. Will that happen?

Joshua to Saul

We said of Moses that he became the leader and the prophet and the law giver. Joshua became the leader and the prophet and the law giver and the general. From the beginning, God sets it up that way:

Jos 1:1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

Jos 1:2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

Jos 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

Jos 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

Jos 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Jos 1:6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this

people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

Consider the words to Joshua again:

Jos 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Did God say this to Joshua because he was special? Because he had been in Moses' inner circle? Not at all. He said it because Joshua was willing to listen. He says it to us all, every day: "as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." The Israelites followed Joshua as long as he lived. He was a successful leader.

As he approaches the end of his life, he tells the leaders of the tribes:

Jos 24:13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

Jos 24:14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

Jos 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Jos 24:16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

Jos 24:17 For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

Jos 24:18 And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

Jos 24:19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Jos 24:21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will

serve the Lord.

Jos 24:22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

Jos 24:23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

Jos 24:24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

Jos 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Jos 24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Jos 24:27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

Jos 24:28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

So, everything was fine. Joshua died.

Jud 2:10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Jud 2:11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

Jud 2:12 And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

Jud 2:13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

So, the Israelites abandoned the Lord, and they were conquered by King Aram Naharaim and turned back to God, and he inspired Othniel, who kicked the king out.

After forty years, Othniel died, and the Israelites abandoned the Lord, and they were conquered by Egklon, king of Moab. They turned back to God, and he inspired Ehud, who kicked the king out.

Now you would think they had learned their lesson. After Ehud died, the Israelites abandoned the Lord, and they were conquered by Jabin, king of Canaan. This time, the army was guided by Deborah.

After forty years, Israelites abandoned the Lord, and they were conquered by the Midianites. Reluctantly, Gideon arose as the new hero (Judge).

Jud 8:22 Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

Jud 8:23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

God's plan hasn't changed; neither have the plans of the Israelites. God wants a nation peopled by those like Moses and Joshua and Enoch. The Israelites want a king, so they don't have to be bothered. They have bigger fish to fry.

After Gideon, things went okay for a time, but then the Israelites started worshipping other gods, and were captured by the Philistines. Yet, again, they turned to God, and this time Jephthah arose to drive the Philistines out. Jephthah vowed that, if he would win the battle, he would sacrifice the first thing coming out of his house when he returned as a burnt offering. This turned out to be his daughter. She understood, and he gave her two months to celebrate the sacrifice, in advance. Jephthah sacrificed his daughter.

Samuel was given to the priest Eli to raise when he was very young. He was called by the Lord when he was still a boy, and the word of the Lord was known from his Mediumship. Samuel's call came while he was asleep and woke him up. He thought it was Eli calling him.

In a battle with the Philistines, the Ark of the covenant was lost. Eli's sons died in the battle. When he heard about the loss, Eli died. His daughter in law went into labor, and gave birth to Ichabod, but she died too.

The Philistines returned the Ark after it destroyed their cities.

1Sa 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

1Sa 7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

So, Samuel became the Judge, and when he gathered the Israelites at Mizpah, the Philistines attacked, and the Israelites defeated them. When Samuel grew old,

1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

1Sa 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

1Sa 8:7 And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

1Sa 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

Samuel chose Saul to be the king of Israel, as God instructed him to do. What is significant in the story is that the Israelites kept making the same mistakes over and over. They began to worship other gods, and turn their back on God. They did not destroy their enemies, the enemies then turned upon them and conquered them. They then turned back to God, who sent a deliverer, who commanded armies and threw out the oppressor.

For us in our youth, we do the same thing. We find another god to worship. It seems to work for a while, but then it stops working, we return to God.

This is most obvious when we think about addiction. Whether it be alcohol or drugs or gambling or sex, it is obvious that the addiction becomes the god they worship.

This is really easy to observe, since these addictions are things which

we dislike as a society.

What is less obvious are those things which society likes. Being a good mother is important. Being a good employee, moving up the corporate ladder, making money and providing for your family are important. These things can also be false gods. Even being a medium or a minister can be a false god. It is less the activity than the attitude that is important. The requirement that God has is that God has to be first. If God is second, then what ever is first is standing between you and God.

The purpose of the soul's progression is to return to God. This must, then be the primary goal.

The warning against strange gods is generally seen as a function of the Law of Retribution. This is a misperception. It is a function of the Law of Cause and Effect.

This is a good time to talk about the call of Samuel and also about the call of Moses.

Ex 3:1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

Ex 3:2 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Ex 3:3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Ex 3:4 And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Ex 3:5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Ex 3:6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

And for Samuel;

1Sa 3:3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down

to sleep;

1Sa 3:4 That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

1Sa 3:5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

1Sa 3:6 And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

1Sa 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.

1Sa 3:8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

1Sa 3:9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

1Sa 3:10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

1Sa 3:11 And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

For Samuel, the call comes when he is asleep. For Moses, it comes very dramatically. Often, the call comes to us as children, and we forget it as we go through adolescence.

Sometimes, it is dramatic, a life changing moment, as it was for Moses. Sometimes, it comes as a call, like with Samuel. Often, it is a series of random events that change our direction. Always, it is a call toward the soul's progression and return to God. And always, the call requires conscious acceptance, and a removal of the individual from the group.

We started with Eden and said that the ability to know Good from Evil, which is the ability to judge, keeps us out of the garden of Eden. We judge everything. When we begin the practice of non-judgment, often our non-judgment is comprised of a string of judgments.

What, then is the point? Is there a destination? At the point where we are called, we have only the call. It is the only thing which separated us from the judgments.

The call is not the end of the struggle, it is the beginning of the struggle. We see that the Israelites kept making the same mistakes over and over again. They worshipped false gods, and when the roof caved in, they turned to God and were delivered.

They were even told point blank, Jud 8:23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

They kept asking for a secular king, and finally, in the time of Samuel, God relented, At this point, what the Israelites want is more important than what God wants, which is a nation of priests and holy people.