

18 Shevat 5775 (7/02/15) **Aggressive Redemptive Love That is Not Childish** J. M. Terrett

Yitro Jethro (Abundance) Heavenly Restrictions Apply

Torah: Exodus 18:1-20:26

(1) **18:11:** *I recognize that YHVH is greater (bigger) than all the gods; for the wickedness of the Egyptians has fallen back on them.* Jethro has had his faith in the Mighty G-d confirmed - not that he did not already believe this, but in a life and death conflict between the mightiest gods of the ancient Middle East and the One true G-d, guess who won? The wickedness of the Egyptians was related to their worship of false gods. Worship belongs exclusively to the One true G-d. Nothing else and no-one else is worthy of worship.

(2) **18:12:** *Moses' father-in-law, Jethro offered a burnt offering and sacrifices to G-d. Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and participated in a meal with the father-in-law of Moses in the presence of G-d.* The first act of corporate worship by the newly redeemed community was lead by a gentile priest. The meaning of the phrase "in the presence of G-d" does not mean that this ceremony occurred on the mountain or that there was the same degree of fireworks - what it does mean is that the first time the elders of Israel had an encounter with G-d, this ceremony was conducted by a gentile priest. Access to G-d has always been there for both Jews and Gentiles who are prepared to walk with Him according to His Word.

(3) **20:5:** *You shall not prostrate yourself before them and you shall never serve them; for I, YHVH, your G-d am a jealous G-d, who punishes the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third or fourth generation of those who hate me (mercy the 1,000 generations of those who love me and keep my commandments).* In the L-rd there are no other bases to cover. Believers who understand the singular wonder and majesty of G-d actually perpetrate a heinous crime when they split their devotion between the only true G-d and any false gods or idols.

Our religious and spiritual devotion is the singular prerogative of the only Being worthy of such adulation. Do not waste your devotion, it belongs to G-d alone and to no-one else or nothing else, for He alone is worthy.

(4) **20:11:** *For in six days YHVH made the heavens and the earth and the sea and that is contained therein, and He rested the seventh day: that is why YHVH has blessed the day of rest and has sanctified it.* I am amazed at those who limit the call to observe the Sabbath to Jewish people, because it is reminder of creation. It is a sign between the L-rd and Israel to acknowledge the fact that we serve the Creator, but as it is enshrined in the ten commandments, it is just as non-negotiable as any one of the ten.

It is one of the heavenly restrictions which apply to how we are called to serve G-d with our time - the temporal imperative is as valid as any and all of the other nine stipulations, nothing more, nothing less.

Haftarah: Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:6,7 (5.6)

(5) **6:1:** *In the year when King Uzziah died, I saw the L-rd sitting upon a very high throne, and the hem of His garment filled the temple.* Isaiah has a vision of the heavenly

temple where the shechinah (glory) of G-d is too big to fit into the temple - indeed the entire cosmos would be too small to contain His glory, which is truly infinite. When we understand who He really is, it is not only extremely wonderful, it is extremely terrifying. Isaiah lived at a time when there was a plot against the House of David - a plot against this house was a plot against the Heavenly King and was just as futile. Nothing could ever dethrone the King of Glory and we enthrone Him in our lives when we worship Him and when we walk with Him according to His Word. He will be seen by and accessed by those who apply His Heavenly restrictions to their lives. How about you?

(6) **9:6 (5):** *For unto us a child is born, a son is given unto us, and the dominion shall rest upon His shoulder; He shall be called Wonderful, counsellor, Mighty G-d, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.* The sceptre could not depart from Judah, until Shiloh came and in this passage, the fivefold declaration of the deity of Messiah makes us realize that He is the One whose hem filled the temple and whose presence wants to fill the temple of our hearts and lives. Heavenly restrictions prevent spiritual impurities from polluting our lives.

Brit Chadashah: Matt. 5:8-20

(7) **5:19:** *Whoever shall subtract (remove) one of the least of these commandments and who shall teach men to do so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of the Heavens; but whoever shall keep them and teach others to observe them; this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of the Heavens.* The Messiah is the L-rd of the Word which was given on Mount Sinai and He did not come to diminish, replace or add to the Word which was given on the Holy Mountain. He came to fulfil the stipulations of this Word and to proclaim the same level and kind of obedience which the L-rd still requires from all those who would worship Him and serve Him in truth and in reality. His heavenly restrictions remain as non-negotiable as His love and grace and mercy. The two will always work together and will never contradict nor compete with each other, but always remain two sides of the same coin.

(Sharon, p. 41) **Psalm 19** Jewish Hero: Sydney and Linda Speakman.

Sermon Passage: *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, but when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. Today we see through a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face; today I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I am fully known. Now there are three things which remain: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love.*

This passage clearly delineates three stages in our spiritual growth. There is first our spiritual childhood, where we act childishly. Next there is our spiritual maturity where we put away our childishness and lastly there is our spiritual completion which will occur when the Kingdom comes and the world is finally brought to an end, and not a moment before.

Now the Scriptures distinguish between childlike and childish. We need to come to the L-rd with the complete trust which a baby gives to its parent and it is a form of complete surrender which both initiates and undergirds authentic biblical faith and spirituality. However, we are not called to remain immature spiritually, either in our faith or in our spirituality (our obedience). Sadly it is possible to come to faith as a little child and to remain immature, which is another way of saying carnal or sterile, unfruitful and non productive.

Israel experienced a great deliverance and weakly stumbled through the wilderness towards

Sinai. At the mountain they received their marching orders so that the motley crew which bumbled its way out of the darkness of Egypt, could truly become the Hosts of the L-RD and walk in His ways in every area of their lives as they marched towards the Promised Land.

Our faith needs to remain childlike in the sense that we can never fully understand or even fully contemplate the incredible majesty and glory of who the L-rd is. Our faith needs to stop being childish so that we learn to behave according to the heavenly stipulations of His Word. Our complete confidence in Him needs to remain like that of a tiny baby, but the life we lead in Him, needs to reflect the changes which His Word wants to bring into our lives as we learn to live by a different agenda. He is saying that it is time to grow up spiritually and not be carnal.

Paul found that both the morality and the spirituality of the Corinthian church was deficient and he describes this deficiency as a form of childishness which they have to learn to grow out of. He says that they possess a triple childishness which prevents them from growing and walking with the L-rd in ways which would please Him and would give them the strength and health they need to be salty in a spiritually tasteless world and to shine as lights in a morally dark world. Childishness means we resemble the world and are functionally assimilated into it.

He says that they speak like children, think like children and reason like children. Again he is not referring to a kind of childlike behaviour which is commendable; he is lamenting a pernicious kind of carnality which is tearing apart the fabric of the Corinthian community. The childish speech which he refers to can be seen in the gossip and slander which the congregation is full of. He could also be referring to the loud and raucous disorder which prevailed in their worship services which was along very pagan lines.

They thought like children because they saw nothing wrong with the moral and spiritual disharmony which they actively encouraged and were even boastful about. Drunken communion services competed with gross sexual immorality as their worship services descended into out of control yelling matches which were like group seizures in imitation of the pagan rights of Delphi and not according to stipulations of Sinai and Calvary.

There was nothing which was authentically spiritual in how they lived and Paul wants them to understand that they have to also cease being childish in the way they reasoned - in the way they justified their negative behaviour and in the way they were unable to see how far off the mark they were. This triple carnality was a greater barrier (threat) to their spirituality than either the enemy of their souls or the world out of which they had been redeemed.

He moves on to let them know that he does not expect them to have full understanding or even a perfect spirituality, because all we will ever be in this life is partial - even temporary when it is compared to the coming glory. He even says that we shall one day know as thoroughly as we are known, but contrary to the gnostics who claimed to have greater or fuller, complete knowledge, Paul says that this kind of spiritual fulfilment and completeness will only be made available when the Kingdom comes. He is also saying that aggressive redemptive love, not complete or full knowledge is our link to this coming kingdom.

Spiritual completeness is not the same as spiritual wholeness and while we cannot attain spiritual completeness in this life, he ends his description of love with a threefold description of what this spiritual wholeness will look like. He says that there are three spiritual functions which need to be active and healthy in our lives: faith, hope and love.

Faith can be described both as a form of obedience to the stipulations of His Word and a form of confidence in His ability to provide and protect as we walk as pilgrims from conception to the grave and beyond - or as we walk from the moment of our encounter with Him through all the storms and valleys we will encounter as we learn to see things His way and as we learnt to do things His way. Faith is both an assurance and an obedience and the Corinthians were deficient in both their assurance and their obedience. How about you? How is your faith doing? Are you able to show your faith by your works or is your faith comatose because of disobedience - which can be described as both not doing what you should and also doing that which you shouldn't. Faith needs to move mountains and not build stumbling blocks.

He moves on to hope, because there are certain aspects of our faith which we will not possess until the kingdom comes. Our lives will remain a pilgrimage and a battleground, but we keep going because we know what is waiting for us when the kingdom comes. We know this world is not our home and all the hopes and fears which it generates become more and more alien to us as we grow in Him through His Word. How is your hope doing? What are you hoping for, both in this life and in the one to come? Which kingdom are you waiting for?

He finishes as he started, with a mention of love, which is the greatest spiritual function a believer can have in their life. Said another way, without love, we are less than nothing in the L-rd, even if we have mighty faith and incredible hope. Love heals, love guides and love feeds the soul and life of believers and of the congregation.

We are called to lay aside the childishness of the flesh and we are called to grow in the power and protection of the L-rd. Love is described as the only way this kind of growth can occur and it is also the glue which will hold our lives together, both as individuals and as a community. Love is also the only permanent feature of our walk with the L-rd which we can take with us into the Kingdom. Childlike faith has no room for childish faith and childlike faith wants to grow and deepen the love which was shown to it the moment it encountered the wonder of the L-rd. Childlike faith wants to overcome the flesh, the world and the enemy.

We need faith. We need hope. But beyond these two, we need love, don't leave home without it! It will cause our faith and hope to grow the way they should. How are yours doing?