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New Year's Sermon 2015: The Beginning

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Vayechi

And He Lived

Seeing the Biggest Bigger Picture

Torah:

Gen. 47:28-50:26

(1) **48:6:** *But the children which have been born to you after them shall be yours; they shall be named after the name of their brothers in their inheritance.* From this we may assume that Joseph had other children who had the choice of either joining Ephraim or Manasseh. We are only given a summary of the major events and not all the details.

All that happens to us in our lives should only matter in terms of the biggest bigger picture, which is the coming of our Messiah's eternal kingdom in the new Heavens and the new Earth. Everything else is just details we pass through and should not be the focus of our lives or of our devotion.

(2) **49:10:** *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes and the peoples obey Him.* Joseph was used of G-d to bring about a great deliverance and because of this he is reckoned Israel's first born, even though he was the second youngest. But in the grand scheme of things, the ruling sceptre belongs to Judah and it did not depart until Shiloh came.

And one day all the peoples shall obey Him, Shiloh, because the biggest bigger picture will always be fulfilled in G-d's time and in G-d's way. May He always have His way in our lives and may we never get in His way in our lives!

(3) **49:18:** *I hope in your deliverance, YHVH.* It must have been both tiring and frightening for the 137 year old Jacob to prophecy and say things which he did not understand and which may have scared him more than a little bit. He was given a partial view of some of the future destiny of his sons and he knew that only the intervention of the L-rd could bring these marvellous things to pass. His marvellous things will always come to pass, over and above anything this world can throw at us and at these purposes. Cling to the biggest bigger picture.

(4) **50:20:** *You have meditated to do me ill: G-d changed it into good, in order to accomplish that which is happening today, to save the lives of a numerous people.* All things work together for the good of those who are called according to the purposes of G-d, even when this is not the intention of those who wish to do us harm and who wish to thwart the purposes of G-d.

At the end of a tumultuous life and surrounded by his children and grandchildren and perhaps even his great grandchildren, Jacob, aka Israel, has seen with his own eyes how marvellous and faithful G-d is to carry out His purposes and he, Jacob, built his life on the biggest bigger purposes of G-d. What are you building your life on?

Haftarah:

I Ki. 2:1-12

(5) **1:9:** *Adonijah killed sheep, cattle and fattened calves, near to the stone of Zoheleth which is beside En-rogel; and he invited all his brothers and all the men of Judah in the service of the king.* David had many wives and about 70 sons, but he had made a promise

to his wife before the L-rd that her eldest son would become king, even though he was very low on the list of possible successors. Adonijah thought that he could capitalize on the weakness and imminent death of the king to advance his agenda and he was the third son to do so, after Amnon and Absalom.

However, it is not the plotting or the sibling rivalries which will advance the purposes of G-d in the long run. Despite all and any potential infighting and scheming, even that which is so well planned and so flawlessly executed, it is the biggest bigger picture which shall succeed and we should never allow ourselves to be pulled away from these even if it appears for a while we are on the losing team. I want to live for the final analysis, how about you?

(6) **1:12: Now therefore come; let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.** There is a place for us to take action in favour of the biggest bigger picture which is why our L-rd said that we should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. All and any of our efforts on behalf of the biggest bigger picture shall be blessed, whatever happens and however things turn out because we are on the winning side.

Brit Chadashah: I P. 1:1-9

(7) **1:5: To you, who, by the power of G-d, are kept by faith for salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last days.** Many of us will encounter things which will attempt to overthrow our confidence in G-d and in His word, but it will always be His power which sees us through as long as we cling to the biggest bigger picture, which is the salvation ready to be revealed in the last days.

From the moment Adam and Eve drew their first breath, the purposes of G-d began to unfold and even through the convolutions and catastrophes their blood has wandered, these purposes have never been derailed or sidetracked. As we begin another new year in the L-rd, may our resolve to cling to the biggest bigger picture keep us centred on what really matters for eternity and on nothing less.

Chazak, Chazak, V'nitchazek!

(Sherri p. 171,173) **Ps. 41** Jewish Hero: pastor Gord Freiter

Sermon: New Year's Sermon 2015: The Beginning. Passage: **Romans 12:1,2: Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of G-d's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to G-d- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what G-d's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Key concepts: for the "best", what is "good", new challenges, old challenges

Key words: (G-d's) mercy, (living) sacrifices, holy, spiritual, worship, pattern, transformed, renewing, test, approve, (G-d's) will, good, pleasing, perfect.

Theme: being recharged, unafraid of the future, committed to not repeating the mistakes of the past but walking with the L-rd in the present as we see the future unfold. Making sure we spend some dry dock time to repair and refit and restock for the journey ahead, so that the whatever's we encounter become the certain context for us to offer our faithful obedience to

our victorious, resurrected Messiah, making His provision and our faithfulness the two certainties we can count on in the coming year.

In our global society, faith and religion are fast losing ground to an increasingly aggressive secular humanism which loudly proclaims evolutionary materialism as the way, the truth and the life and Bible believers are fast becoming an endangered species. We are seen as anachronisms who no longer have anything relevant to say to a society for whom we are vestiges of a bygone era which has been measured and found wanting.

The media portrayal of believers is rarely sympathetic and the key faith and moral elements of our belief system are rapidly becoming socially unacceptable and very politically incorrect. Under the guise of all-inclusiveness we are relentlessly encouraged to abandon the distinctives of our faith and see our belief system as nothing more than an ancient myth with about as much relevance as any of the other ancient myths of any number of extinct ancient ideologies.

Religion is seen as a comfort for the dying and for the distressed on par with any nursery stories which teach children good values until they grow out of the need to believe in fairies and Santa Claus. I wonder if we really understand how low our spiritual credibility has fallen in the eyes of our post spiritual secular society. We have a few options.

We can give in and assimilate as too many church groups and even synagogues have done and may it be that our Lord drowns their sacrificial pigs as He did when He walked among us. I say this because assimilation away from our core beliefs and our core morality is tantamount to spiritual death and I for one refuse not to become a modern day Maccabee and even though words can may actually break my bones, our call in 2015 is to renew our faith and not to renege on any aspect of it.

I am an ex nihilo creationist who believes with perfect faith in the worldwide flood under Noah, the exodus from Egypt under Moses, and the resurrection of our blessed Redeemer according to the promises and prophecies which His Word proclaims.

Having said this, I also need to absorb and practice all the subsequent morality which is an inseparable, integral part of this same belief system, no matter how unpopular and politically incorrect this may be.

True inclusiveness can only be achieved in our Messiah and according to His Word; all the rest is secular subterfuge bent on the destruction of the Gospel, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. This sounds pretty ominous and there is one further option I have not explored - hiding our faith and our morality under a bushel and acting like we are part of the world when we are out in it and doing our best to make sure that our friends and coworkers do not find out what it is we believe or how we believe people should live.

Our Bible is seen by some as hate literature and the actions of G-d's people in the past are seen as episodes of genocide carried out by primitive people who did not know any better. There are also some secret believers who don't want to rock the boat and want us to just be positive and upbeat and not take any public stances or make any public statements which would get us into trouble with our slick modern world.

Obviously I am not going to promote any other option than making a firm stand on His Word,

both in what we believe and in how we live, but this still leaves us with the question of what this is going to look like and whether or not solid disciples must necessarily come across as mindless fanatics who cannot be reasoned with.

In 2015, we at B'nai Chayim will face our spiritual and moral challenges with the unwavering resolve to preach and teach the truth and promote biblical morality in every area of our lives, but not in a conscious attempt to grandstand and revel in the negative propaganda this generates. We want to dialogue with our lost and dying world and explain why it is we believe what we believe and not allow current anti-spiritual stereotypes to scare us into submission to the slavery of political correctness. We will not let them convince us that our faith is negative.

Being firm and definite is not the same thing as being confrontational and even though we will have less and less in common with the society in which we live, we can still reach out and speak to some of the spiritual priorities which secular humanism and evolutionary materialism have not been able to suppress. We are not enemies, but rescuing friends who want to help.

I want to see our Yeshiva Bible Study be a place of serious dialogue. I want to see our prayer meeting become a place of serious encounter with the L-rd through His Spirit. I want to see our services continue to be dynamic, relevant and geared to renewal so that we grow stronger and learn strategies for successful spirituality in our darkening world.

I want to see our knowledge of Hebrew escalate and I want to see us prepare our young people and our future leaders to understand the challenges which are before us and grow in confidence and in effectiveness as we reach out to our friends and neighbours and family members. We will not let our society tarnish us with a false perception as dangerous people.

We had a good year in 2014 and we will have a good year in 2015 as we welcome newcomers and grow in our understanding and appreciation of the spiritual relevance of Messianic Judaism for each of us and all of us in our congregation, whether we are Jewish or Gentile, male or female, young or old, rich or poor. Buckle up, hold on and join us in the victories and in the growth we are trusting the L-rd for as we begin the new year.