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Growing In Faith: How Big is Your G-d?

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Shemot

Names

When the Time is Right

Torah:

Exodus 1:1-6:1

(1) **1:21:** *Because the midwives feared G-d, G-d caused their houses to prosper.* In the midst of great general adversity, the midwives houses prospered. Frequently, the L-rd blesses us through adversity without delivering us out of adversity. The time was right and the midwives did that which was right and were blessed. How about you?

(2) **3:20:** *I shall stretch forth my hand and I will strike Egypt with all kinds of signs which I will do in the midst of her. After this he will let you go.* Moses was shown that it was not going to be a quick fix or an easy deliverance - it was going to be a long, hard struggle. When the time is right, it does not mean that things will fall into place easily and we have to be prepared to see it through, because much of spiritual warfare is long term and we have to be ready to stay the course.

(3) **4:11:** *YHVH said to him: who has made the mouth of man? Who makes dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, YHVH?* We should never think that our personal limitations or our current situations (or even our baggage) limit the ability of G-d to work in our lives and through our lives. He can work through our limitations if we surrender them to Him - learning this kind of surrender moves us into the right time in our lives.

(4) **4:23:** *I say to you, let my son go in order that he would serve Me; if you refuse to let him go, I will kill your son, your first born.* Moses did not lay all his cards on the table at once - he did not begin speaking threats to Pharaoh from the outset. He gave him the chance to respond and do the right thing without having to be forced. G-d will do what is needed to bring His purposes to fulfillment and we have to decide whether we are going to come on board with them willingly or be forced to. The time is always right to come on side with YHVH and everybody will eventually be forced to see things G-d's way. We have to decide whether we will see the truth as adversaries of the King or as His servants. It's our choice.

Haftarah:

Is. 27:6-28:13

(5) **27:6:** *In the times to come, Jacob shall take root. Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit.* G-d's plans for His people have always been generational and international and His victory will eventually bring the world back to its senses. His purposes will always be whole world purposes and the right time will always be focused on bringing these purposes to fulfillment. How are you doing with His whole world purposes?

(6) **28:13:** *And for them the Word of JHVH shall be: precept upon precept, precept upon precept, rule upon rule, rule upon rule, a little here and a little there, in order that in walking they would fall backwards and be broken, in order that they would be snared and taken.*

Many people, believers and non-believers, have their own ideas about what G-d's Word says and for many of them, these opinions are more important than what the Word actually says. They will fall backwards and be snared and taken because they have not received the Word without trying to either water it down or twist it into the kind of message they want it to have.

It cannot be changed and when the time is right, we will either proclaim it or be broken, snared and taken by it. Again the choice is ours.

Brit Chadashah: I Cor. 14:13-25

(7) **14:20:** *Brethren, do not be children when it comes to judgment; but when it concerns wickedness, be children and concerning judgment be adults.* Paul uses the passage in Isaiah to speak to the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthian assembly. They were children when it came to judgment and adults when it came to wickedness, instead of the other way around. When the time is right, the L-rd will give us the chance to walk in His ways or, like Pharaoh and those Israelites who went into captivity, be snared and taken by the message and the purposes we have refused to embrace. Is the time right in your life?

(Bernie p. 175) **Ps. 99** NOSH Jewish Hero: Jacques Turcotte

Message: How big is your G-d?

Passage: ***Do you not know it? Have you not learned it? It is the G-d of Eternity, YHVH who has created the extremities of the earth; He does not get fatigued and does not grow weary and His understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)***

We live in a world which is often confusing and which also frequently appears to be growing increasingly out of control. It is easy to be caught up in this confusion and to lose control of both our faith (what we believe) and our spirituality (how we live). I recently posted on our Facebook page about a colleague of mine in Quebec whose spiritual life collapsed and one of the reasons for it may have been losing sight of the bigness of our G-d.

You see the nations may rage, opponents may rise up and terrorists may run rampant as our western civilization secularizes - indeed as societies across the globe follow suit and as spirituality and faith appear to be rapidly losing ground. It would be too easy to ask G-d why He is allowing this to happen, instead of asking Him what he wants us to do and how He wants us to live as this is happening.

We need to believe that His purposes will be accomplished, both in our lives and in the life of the entire world, even when it seems that they are being thwarted by a spiralling tsunami of spiritual opposition whose momentum is growing and becoming stronger with each passing year.

Our confidence in the ultimate control of G-d is something we have to hang onto even when it seems that darkness and foolishness are winning the battle for the heart allegiance of our world and that public opinion has turned against us and tries to make us look more and more foolish for believing what the Bible says and for trusting that our G-d is in final control.

I would like to suggest a threefold reaction to the world which wants to belittle our G-d and not trust in His final control. From the passage in Isaiah, I would like to suggest that we never lose sight of how the Bible describes G-d (omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and immutable) and that we do not draw our understanding of who He is and what He does from any other lesser source.

Secondly, I would like to suggest that we make sure that He is in control of our lives, both in what we believe and in how we live and how we react to the rising levels of confusion and

darkness in our world. And lastly I would like to suggest that we do not fall into the trap of thinking that when He is in control of our lives we are exempt from the toils and troubles which life will continue to throw at us. He never promises us a rose garden.

I am constantly amazed at how some believers describe G-d and here I will include those who speak on the radio, those who have websites and those who send out unsolicited newsletters and appeals for funding. For some, G-d is the success coach who is going to help them get rich and make all their little dreams come true. Kind of like a cross between Santa Claus and the good fairy, we see Him as our celestial sugar daddy and genie, for whom our wish is His command. This is such a miniature, two dimensional view of G-d.

We sometimes forget the exhortation in Matthew which warns us not to worry about the things which the pagans seek for and for whom spirituality is just a means to get a material edge and which sees faith merely as a source of luck in business, romance and politics. We are told to seek first G-d's kingdom and His righteousness and let these lesser things be provided over and above what really matters. We do not want to concentrate most on what matters least.

For some, G-d is just the ultimate luck charm and when things do not turn out the way they wish, they lose heart because their spiritual expectations are not realized. G-d's purposes should be the basis of our expectations and we need to know what it means to belong to G-d and to call Him our G-d. It does not give us control over Him and it does not give us the power to point Him at our dreams and expect Him to answer our prayers by granting our wishes.

What it does, is to give Him control over our dreams so that we are not trapped into turning the L-rd into some kind of pet. How He will accomplish His purposes is often beyond our ability to understand, but as long as we understand that His purposes will be accomplished, even when ours are thwarted, then we will not have a diminished little view of G-d.

As we hold firm to a view of G-d as the One who is in final control of the whole universe, then we can begin to learn how He wants us to respond to the ups and downs of our journey from conception to the grave and beyond. We want to make His purposes our purpose for living.

You see He wants us to have different goals and expectations than people in the world who have no faith and no hope in life everlasting. Instead of trying to get all we can, can all we get and sit on the lid, we want to use our time and resources to advance His kingdom rather than trying to achieve some personal agenda which has nothing to do with His purposes.

What is really important to you? Why is it so important to you? The heavens declare the glory of G-d and the firmament shows His handiwork. He wants how we live our lives to follow suit and declare His glory and show His handiwork at every stage of our lives.

We still have to earn a living and get on with the business of living, but our lives have a different direction. We need to live as kingdom stewards who look at what is going on in our lives as kingdom opportunities where our joy, our sorrow and especially our focus, reflect our faith in the coming kingdom and in the fruit of His kingdom while we wait for this glorious day. Our treasure is in heaven and in our hearts and we walk to the beat of a different drum (to the sound of the shofar actually). And while we want to do our best to be good, law abiding citizens and helpful community members who want to make a difference - the difference we

want to make will always concern advancing the coming kingdom, constantly, even relentlessly, and not our personal portfolio.

This leads me to my final point which is welcoming the toils and trials of life, not as things from which we are exempt, but as things which we offer to our King along with the joys and victories of our lives. This is because all that we do, we want to do as living sacrifices not looking for an edge or an easy time, but for the straight and narrow path - no matter which valleys it takes us through and which mountains it causes us to climb.

Paul outlined the spiritual resistance (tsouris) which he encountered in the fulfilment of his ministry, and the list appears quite traumatic and overwhelming but it is not even worthy to be compared to the glory which is reserved for us. We will not be exempted from troubles and trials as much as we will be empowered to blaze through them joyfully and peacefully.

We are called to be more than conquerors and that always requires a battleground. While we are never called to go looking for troubles, we are not to feel that troubles cannot touch us as we do His will. We are to see all of life as an opportunity to walk with the G-d of the biggest bigger picture and not have a flawed, deficient view of the Lord of Eternity. We are to live by a different set of priorities and make sure that even if our lives may at times seem out of control, they are lived under His control, whatever happens.

We do not expect to be exempt from trials in our pursuit of a personal success agenda. We are to expect that in all the trials and challenges which come our way, we will overcome and cause our reactions and our lifestyle to be messages of the kingdom to a dying, spiritually corrupt, hostile world.

How big is your G-d? How clear and definite are His purposes in your life? What kind of difference are you making as you wander through life on your pilgrimage to our Father's Home in glory? Whose agenda are you fulfilling, His or your own? What kind of spiritual expectations do you have of G-d?

Serving the L-rd of Heaven and Earth is the greatest privilege available in this mixed up world. It is the only agenda which is worth our time and our energy, anything less would be a tragic waste of our resources. How big is your G-d? Let's pray.