

29 Nissan, 5775 (18/04/15) **Shavuot Series: Preparing to Receive the Spirit of Grace** J. M. Terrett

**Shemini**

**Eighth**

**Spiritual Hygiene 101**

**Torah:**

Leviticus 9:1-11:47

The newly consecrated sons of Aaron perform the first tabernacle cleansing ritual, so that the presence of G-d can come off the mountain (out of Moses' tent, which was pitched outside the camp) and take up residence in the midst of the people. This ritual is almost identical to the annual Yom Kippur ritual, except there is no Azazel goat. This is because the sacrificial system had not yet been inaugurated and was embarking on its maiden voyage. The people watched with great joy (and trepidation) as the Shekinah came into their midst and hovered over them throughout their wilderness wanderings.

Significant, small detail. The fire from the L-RD consumed the offering and they were to use this fire to kindle and maintain the ner tamid or perpetual flame which was to burn before the L-RD. Two sons of Aaron offered strange fire to the L-RD, instead of receiving light from the L-RD. Moses did not ever light the burning bush, nor did he light the fire which hovered over the tabernacle. They were supposed to be guardians of the light and not suppliers of light. The ner tamid was to be a symbol of the eternal light of the L-rd and it was supposed to be lit by the L-RD and not by the priests.

They paid for their presumption with their lives and the people quickly understood that the fire of G-d was not something to be handled lightly. Part of the careful handling of the light was the abstinence from liquor which the priests had to exercise during their ministry in the tabernacle and here for the first time the Aaronites/Levites receive their central teaching mandate: 10:10, 11: ***In order that you could distinguish between that which is holy and that which is profane and that which is pure from that which is impure and teach to the Children of Israel all the laws which YHVH has given to them by Moses.***

What follows next is a lesson in Jewish biology, which has the same teaching function for the Levites. 11:46, 47: ***This is the law touching animals, birds and all the living creatures which moves through the waters and which swarms upon the earth, so that you would distinguish between that which is impure from that which is pure and between the living creatures which can be eaten and those which may not be eaten.***

All of this is holiness 101, which has a double focus: being holy (pure, clean, separate) in order to access the presence - not just separate from, but consecrated to. So let me give you my annual lesson in Jewish biology. There are only five kinds of animals in the world: those who

WALK	It must have split, separate hooves and must ruminate to be <b>kosher-edible</b> .
SLITHER	Nothing that slithers is ever <b>kosher-edible</b> .
CRAWL	If it crawls on many legs, it must jump to be <b>kosher-edible</b> .
FLY	It must have feathers and if it has feathers, it must fly to be <b>kosher-edible</b> .
SWIM	It must have scales and fins to be <b>kosher-edible</b> .

Two (three) further food restrictions are given elsewhere: not to consume the blood (of a living animal), not to boil a kid in its mother's milk and not to eat the fat (of a sacrifice). This had more to do with the ritual use of food to gain spiritual advantage and which we are not to pursue. Holiness 101 prepares us for the presence and prevents us from being defiled.

**Haftarah:** 2 Sam. 6:1-7:17

This is the story of the return of the ark from among the Philistines and its final journey into Jerusalem. The Aaronites and Levites should have known better than to carry the ark in a cart, when it should be carried and Uzzah dies for this breach of essential protocol. When the proper sacrifices are offered (like they were in Leviticus 9) the ark was transported into the city and placed in the tent of meeting (7:3).

When David plans to build the temple (and has gathered all the materials except the stones), he receives the next semester of Holiness 101. The ark and the temple are but symbolic reminders of the true ark and the true celestial temple, because G-d does not dwell in things made by men. He makes His presence accessible by the Spirit and David is promised a household which will last forever - in the Messiah, which leads us to the New Testament portion.

**Brit Chadashah:** Heb. 7:1-19

Holiness 101 continues with an explanation of the superiority of the Messiah's ministry over that which Aaron received since the prophetic king, Melchizedek, blessed the one who had received the promises and the Law. One verse which might be misunderstood: 7:12: **For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law.** The term law (torah) can mean at least three things in the Bible. First it can refer to the Ten Words which are unchangeable and express the heart and soul of true spirituality. Next, there are the instructions and rituals which were given in order for the people to gain (and maintain) access to the Presence - and which are rituals which speak of a greater reality and are not the reality themselves. Lastly it can refer to any teaching or set of rules about anything - even the fixing of motorbikes.

There never was, not never will be a change in the Ten Words (Matt. 5:17-20), but there was much which Moses was not told by G-d and which would be given later (Deut. 18:18) and these concern the power and majesty of the Messiah, which David was given a vision of and which the entire sacrificial system represented symbolically. Holiness 101 takes from the earthly symbols to the heavenly reality and in order to do that there is a change in the rituals of the Law.

You see the priests performed rituals in preparation for the reality of the Messiah, but the symbolic should never usurp the heavenly and when our Messiah came amidst us and performed eternal atonement and forgiveness of sins, He did not do it as a descendent of Aaron, but as a descendent of David. Through His mother He was also a descendent of Aaron, but He did not perform the rituals of salvation. He did this as a descendent of David. He performed the act which guarantees eternal salvation for all the nations and generations of mankind. Now here I want to go out on a biblical limb and take you to the last element of Salvation 101 which we will examine today. Our L-RD never abolished the sacrificial system, He fulfilled it and thus turned it into a symbolic representation of the spiritual reality He accomplished.

Should the temple ever be rebuilt and should the sacrificial system ever be re-established, there would not be another change in the law, because the change which our Messiah

accomplished is permanent and immutable. Those sacrifices would only ever be at most symbolic representations of the Messiah's true sacrifice, nothing more and nothing less. Holiness 101 says that which should use all and any symbolic representations of the spiritual reality as a means to draw us into this reality and into the reality of the Presence of G-d - and which presence I am speaking to in my sermon. How is your holiness doing? Until you have a firm basis in the basics, you are not ready to move on and discover the deeper truths of His Word.

(Angelo: p. 137) **Ps. 128. L-rd's Table.** Jewish Hero: Lupita

Sermon: Preparing to receive the Spirit of Grace (and Truth)

John 14:26, 27 (John 16:5-[13]15) ***But the Comforter (Consoler), the Holy Spirit, whom My Father shall send in my name, He will teach you all things and will remind you of all which I have said to you. I leave you peace, I give you My peace. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled and let it not be alarmed.***

I would like to do a series on the activity of the Holy Spirit as a means to prepare us to celebrate Shavuot next month and I have selected a passage from John where our Messiah is talking about the Spirit of G-d as a comforter/consoler.

Now the first mention of the Spirit occurs in the second verse of Genesis chapter one (the Spirit moved over the waters [cosmos]) and He is mentioned throughout the Torah and the prophets as the active agent of G-d in creation and the One who gives dreams and wisdom and who even fills believers. We have just dealt with the portion of the Torah where the fire of G-d comes to hover over the tabernacle and we understand that the full power and presence of G-d could not be contained by the entirety of creation ( I Kings 8:27). How then can His presence come into the tabernacle and take up residence between the two cherubim?

Throughout the Scriptures it is understood that the active agent of G-d in and through creation is the Holy spirit. It was the Spirit which appeared in the burning bush and it was the Spirit that appeared in the fire on the mountain and it was the Spirit which took up residence behind the veil in the tabernacle - and eventually in the temple when it was built.

Now we understand that G-d is not physical and the only physical form which contained His fullness, was when our Messiah came and tabernacled among us.

But even there, this presence was veiled and was only partially made manifest on the mount of transfiguration. Once we have understood Holiness 101, we are ready to move on to the Holy Spirit 101 and begin to prepare ourselves to celebrate Shavuot where the Spirit was poured out 2,000 years ago.

How do you explain the Spirit and how do you understand the Spirit. Two thoughts; first of all, we can only describe the Spirit, since He is eternal unfathomable. Second of all, we can only use the descriptions of the Spirit which are given in the Scriptures - especially since Shavuot is also the festival of the Word, as well as that of the Spirit.

I do not claim to be able to expound on all the depths of the Spirit, but I can proclaim and

affirm that these depths are adequately described in the Scriptures and that no depth of the Spirit can exist apart from what is described in the Scriptures. Having said this, let me say that there is more than enough material about the Spirit in the Scriptures for us, to be an adequate, comprehensive picture of what He is like and what He does.

Let me say as a foundation, that the Spirit of G-d is that link between the infinite fullness of G-d in the Heaven of Heavens and His finite creation in which we live. He has been called the breath of G-d, the wind of G-d (ruach), but the Scriptures also describe Him as the fire (aysh) and it was this fire which Ezekiel's wheels within wheels pick up. It was this fire of G-d which lit the way for our people to walk seven days and nights to make it out of Egyptian territory and it was this fire which was on Moses and the elders and which also appeared on the 120 in the upper room.

Fire can be destructive but it also can cleanse and purify and this aspect of the Spirit as the fire of G-d and the breath G-d gives us a picture of both the life giving presence of G-d and His purifying and purging of our souls.

Now here is some theology which may be difficult for us to grasp, but it is necessary if we are going to proceed with Holy Spirit 101. In a very real sense, the fullness of G-d, through His Spirit, did reside in and on our Messiah, but it was hidden.

In John it is said that Messiah did breathe on them to receive the Spirit, but it was not the abiding presence of the Spirit which takes up residence in believers when we accept the L-rd.

In fact, the Scriptures describe three kinds of experience we can have with the Spirit. First He is **with** all mankind and is the agent of G-d's omnipresence in our universe (and His omnipotence and omniscience too).

There are agents who function under the supervision of the Spirit which are called angels and which travel over the earth (and beyond) to be messengers of G-d. They watch over believers (and all mankind), but they cannot individually be everywhere at once - and at some time in the future, I will deal with what the Bible teaches about these emissaries of G-d.

Next the spirit is **in** all believers and we become the temple of the Spirit (I Cor. 6:19) - not in the same sense as our Messiah was, but the Spirit links our spirits with the Messiah and His sacrifice and His light (ner tamid) burns in the depth of our beings. We can be in some very dark places and can lose sight of this light - and it may diminish down to a spark, but we will deal with this kind of quenching (grieving) in a later message. When we say He is in us, we are saying that we are fully and freely connected to the L-rd, be that connection strong and healthy or just tenuous. How is your connection doing?

The third experience in the Spirit is that He comes **upon** people and fills them either with wisdom (Joseph, Daniel) or with power (Samuel, Elijah) or with joy and gladness (David, disciples at Pentecost). This is more of an ecstatic, time geared experience which is both powerful and repeatable.

Our passage today speaks about the Spirit as a comforter who is not given as the world gives, but is really our permanent link with the Messiah which will help us to serially overcome the world and never be abandoned or forsaken in the world. It is also in this role that He will

remind us (quicken us) concerning truths which the L-rd has taught us from His word.

Does this mean that the spirit can also teach us things which go beyond what the Word says? Can we receive specific instructions in situations which are not dealt with directly by the Bible? There are people in our world today and people in history who believe that they have received revelations and truths which go beyond the Bible and which, in their understanding, have become as essential as the Bible.

Now before you start collecting wood to burn me at the stake, let me conclude our service this morning by dealing briefly with this potentially volatile area of the Comforter's ministry. The Scriptures do say that what the eye has not seen or the ear has not heard, has been revealed to us by the Spirit and it is possible and even essential for us to receive frequent directions from the Spirit as we walk through the darkness of this life towards our Father's home in glory.

Three principles to avoid extremes or error in this kind of essential direction from the Spirit; First, the Spirit will neither contradict the Scriptures, nor reveal mysteries which the Bible also refuses to pass on to us (the secret things of G-d). Secondly, the direction which we receive from the Spirit will also never contradict the teachings of the Scriptures - they will be very practical applications of the eternal principles of G-d. Lastly, they will always confirm and never contradict what G-d is already saying to us from His Word in our hearts.

The apostles said that their hearts burned within them when the resurrected Messiah spoke to them from the Scriptures and reminded them of what He had taught them over the three years of their training. There are often many issues which the L-rd is working with us on, both as individuals and as a community (and as a nation and as peoples of the world) which He will speak to and cause us to examine (or run away from), but He will always deal with us directly, before he sends others to tell us things. In other words, He will first speak directly to us in our hearts and by His Word, before he sends someone with a special word to us.

The indwelling spirit of G-d will maintain a dialogue with our spirit and it is this dialogue which will form the basis on any subsequent dialoguing He may send others to do with us about everything and anything.

You see, we only have four true friends in the world: our heart, our head, His Word and our community and they will work together and not bring us confusion or contradiction, because they will always speak with a common voice and never be in contradiction with each other in our lives. If your heart says not to do it or say it, don't. If your heart says to do it, do, but if you are not sure, wait for more confirmation.

If your head says not to do it, don't. If your head says to do it, do it, or if you are unsure wait for further confirmation. If the Bible says not to do it, don't. If it says to do it, do it, or wait for further confirmation. If your community says not to do it, don't. If your community says to do it, do, or if you are unsure, wait for further confirmation.

The Spirit of G-d is our inner, invisible comforter who will guide and lead us through this life at every stage of our lives as we learn to discern His voice and listen to it. We are not alone in this world and others who are also guided by this Spirit will come into our lives. We should listen to them - as long as they taste the same and confirm what G-d is already saying to us.

We will not be lead into the depths of the secret mysteries of G-d and even if we were, we would receive a stern hush order, like Paul did, because it is not the secrets of G-d which will help us walk with Him, it is His Spirit in us and through us. He is with us all. He can be in us all and He wishes to fill us all.

I have not got into much of the charismatic manifestations of the Spirit, because that is better suited to an interactive conversation at our Bible study Yeshiva - and I invite people to bring it up. Suffice it to say that as a community of believers we believe in the orderly exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. We may get a little excited, but we will never lose control like the Corinthians did and our services will never turn into shouting matches where we compete to see who can make the most noise.

The Spirit of G-d is awesome and sometimes quite terrifying, but He is also our comforter who brings the personal presence of our Messiah and the Father into our hearts as He speaks to our hearts and lives to enrich us spiritually and to guide us into all the wisdom and strength we need to walk with Him victoriously through this life.

There are other aspects of how the Spirit works which we will also deal with in subsequent messages as we count down the Omer to Shavuot. Be filled with the Spirit! Acknowledge His presence with you as you learn to maintain a dynamic dialogue with your best spiritual counsellor.

Learn to recognize His voice and to respond to His promptings, so that you never have to be troubled or afraid as you walk through this life.

Next week, more about His convicting, warning and arming. Let us get ready to observe the L-rd's Table on this the last shabbat of the month of Nissan.