

5 Sivan, 5775 (23/5/15) **Shavuot: A Spiritual Encounter with the Word** J. M. Terrett

Bamidbar **In The Wilderness** **Getting Ready to Move**

Torah: Numbers 1:1-4:20
Haftarah: Hosea 1:10-2:20 (2:1-2:22)
Brit Chadashah: Romans 9:22-33

Today's Torah portion begins our journey through the book of Numbers and that bumpy journey our people had through the wilderness for an entire generation. However, in the beginning of their journey, they were organized into a harmonious camping and marching position that continually pointed them towards the Promised Land and with the blessing of the L-rd, they were unstoppable. With the Tabernacle in the middle, surrounded by the families of the Levites, the tribes were to camp under four banners (E, S, W, N). The rabble which left Egypt was now being organized into the Hosts of the L-RD and we are called to the same level of harmony and Torah centeredness in our lives, both as a congregation and as individuals.

Today's Haftarah (Prophetic) Portion deals with the unfaithfulness of Israel which caused our people to go into captivity and with the restoration of the nation, once we return to the L-rd. He will both heal the wounds and restore the blessedness of the people. He is in the same business today. His glory is not diminished or tarnished by our foolishness.

The New Testament portion deals with a great mystery which many stumble at and misunderstand. The elect or chosen people of G-d come from both the Jewish people and the nations. And just as our people stumbled when they were called to obey the Word and went into captivity, so our people stumble at the stumbling stone (Messiah) until they come to Him through faith - which we see happening more and more and it is exciting.

I want to show you how the camp was set up so you can see how the L-rd can bring precision out of confusion and turn rabble into a finely tuned instrument of precision with His Word at the centre.

Special Passages for Shavuot (Pentecost):

Exod. 19:1-20:23; The Giving of the Ten (Sermon)

Ezek. 1:1-28; 3:12; Wheels within Wheels, a vision of glory (Sermon)

John 1:32-34; The Son receives the full measure of the Spirit
 Matt. 3:11-17; Preparing the way for the Baptism in the Spirit
 Acts 2:1-21 The Amazing Day of Pentecost (Sermon)

(Sherri p. 147) **Ps. 122** Jewish Hero: Ezekiel **YIZKOR** L-rd's Table
 The Layout of the camp in the wilderness:

NORTH Dan
Asher
Naphtali

Merari

WEST	Ephraim Manasseh Benjamin	Gershon	Tabernacle	<i>Aaronites</i>	EAST	Judah Issachar Zebulun
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Kohath

SOUTH Ruben
Simeon
Gad

Marching Order:

The Ark (carried by the Aaronites) preceded by the hovering fire

The Banner of Judah (three tribes)

Gershon and Merari

The Banner of Ruben (three tribes)

Kohath

The Banner of Ephraim (three tribes)

The Banner of Dan (three tribes)

What lessons can we learn from this level of precision? I see at least four:

1. Each of us has a place in the community, be it ever so humble or ever so grand
2. We have to find where we fit. The motley crew which left Egypt was crafted into the Hosts of the L-RD. He wants to build order and harmony in our midst.
3. The Ark was always in the centre and facing east (towards the Holy Land)

4. The fire showed them when to move and when to stay put.

The purpose of life for each of us is to find the L-rd and then to find our place in the body (community) of our L-rd - Jew and Gentile, male and female, young and old, leadership and followership.

This kind of community precision is not fragile and the whole is not messed up when something is out of place - it is a guide to both building and keeping community harmony. We need to always keep the L-rd through His Word at the centre of our lives. We need to always be facing towards our eventual home and be moving in that direction. We need to be finding our place in the community and not live as stragglers or camp followers.

Three questions then we will promenade the Torah.

1. what is at the centre of your life?
2. Which direction are you heading in?
3. Have you found your place in the community?

Sermon: A Spiritual Encounter with the Word

I want to deal with three passages with you briefly this morning.

I want to take you through the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:1-20:23) (the five times Moses went up the mountain: 1. the general commitment, 2. the fire and cloud descends (keep your distance) 3. receiving the Ten Words, 4. jurisprudence, 5. The ritual meal with the 70 elders

I want to take you through Ezekiel's amazing vision of the Spirit empowered Word and the four living creatures (four faces of Messiah) - the enduring mystery.

I want to take you to the Upper Room (the vehicle of Messiah's presence, empowering us to the ends of the earth.

the Ten: Exod. 19:1-20:23 The Unchanging essence of true spirituality

1. 20:3 No other gods before Me.
2. 20:4-6 Never worship the works of your hands. He remains indescribable and infinite.
3. 20:7 We are His servants, not the other way around.
4. 20:8-11 Rest is holy and He wants to be L-rd of our time.
5. 20:12 Respect the blood of Adam and Eve, flowing through the generations.
6. 20:13 Cain was wrong. Death without due process is murder.

- 7. 20:14 Sexual reproduction is the sole mandate of marriage.
- 8. 20:15 Ownership can only be transferred by negotiation.
- 9. 20:16 You have to speak the truth in order to know the truth.
- 10. 20:17 If you have to have what you do not have in order to be happy, you never will be.

Ezekiel's Vision: Ezekiel 1:1-28 Description Not Definition

The four faces:

- (1) the human being (Luke: a man)
- (2) the lion (Matthew: a King)
- (3) the cattle (Mark: a servant)
- (4) the eagle (John: divine)

Ezekiel is describing the indescribable beauty and wonder of G-d and He sees the throne and the One who is seated on it. The vision appears in the Revelation with the same limitations - this is what it looked like, we are not told anymore in this life.

Undoubtedly Moses saw this vision in the cloud but did not speak of it yet because the time was not yet. The elders who went up the mountain with Him only saw the feet.

The mystery of our Messiah speaks of the love of G-d who sent His Son to tabernacle among us as the human servant King who is G-d in the flesh. He returned to Heaven, so that the next stage of His plans could be fulfilled - returning through the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Upper Room: Acts 2:1-21

The Upper Room was the same place where they had celebrated Passover. **There were 120 people present praying** (not necessarily all night).

A mighty wind filled the room and a flame of fire landed on them and they spoke with other tongues (reverse Babel - one people scattered into many tongues, many people reunited by many tongues). The Messiah came back into their midst through the Holy Spirit.

They left the Upper Room (fear of an earthquake?) and poured out onto the street which was already filled with people who had heard (felt) the wind and were also afraid of an earthquake.

Jews and converts from all over the ancient world heard the Galileans speak in their native tongues. Many thought they were drunk, but they did not behave drunkenly. This outpouring connected with the prophecy of Joel that all flesh (Jew and Gentile) shall be called back to the L-rd and His Word, which was to be proclaimed generationally to the ends of the earth.

The Word has not changed, the vision has not changed - neither G-d nor His Word were

altered in any way. The Spirit and the Word are indivisible.

From the start of the Scriptures and throughout the History of Israel the four aspects of the Messiah were proclaimed, so that the scattered children of Adam and Eve could come back to G-d through His Word because of what the Messiah accomplished on the cross.

The Ten represent His timeless, integrated spiritual priorities, nothing more nothing less. **The freedom in the Spirit refers to direct access** to the Heavenly altar, because our bodies have become the living temples of G-d and the sacrificial system is fulfilled and now we look back and celebrate the reality which is now ours, as Jews and Gentiles.

The same requirements for righteousness apply today as they always have, but now we have the Spirit who brings Messiah to indwell us so that we can be empowered to fulfil the righteous requirements of the Word (the Law).

You see, there are at least four meanings for Law in the Bible. There are first the Ten which are the basis of all which follows. Then there is the application of the Ten through various jurisprudence (situations which our people encountered to show us how to apply the same Ten to situations which we encounter). Then there are the rituals of praise and sacrifice. The sacrifice of our L-rd fulfils this part of the Law and we are set free to offer the double sacrifice of praise and obedience as we follow the annual festival cycle which was not abolished.

Our G-d has not changed - He wants to change us and empower us to practice the same integrated Spirituality, which He has always called His people to, Jew and Gentile. Chag Shavuot. Happy Pentecost! May we continue to have a spiritual encounter with the Word, daily, yearly and generationally until His kingdom comes and we see Him as He is, as He is described in His Word, fully and no longer through symbolic pictures.