

23 Av, 5775 (08/09/15) **Strong Opinions Without Arguments** J. M. Terrett

Eikev As A Result Do You Know Where Your Heart is Really At?

Torah: Deut. 7:12-11:25

(1) **7:17: Perhaps you shall say in your heart: These nations are more numerous than me; how shall I be able to chase them out?** We need to never be daunted or freaked out by the size or the number of our adversaries or the obstacles which confront us in the calling of G-d, because it is His strength, power and provision which will accomplish His will in our lives - no matter how stinky, how expensive or how complicated things get once in a while for us - this is where your heart needs to be - really - full of peaceful assurance.

(2) **8:2: Remember all the path that YHVH your G-d has made you make during these 40 years in the wilderness, in order to humble you and to try you to know the dispositions of your heart and see whether or not you would keep His commandments.** Sometimes He is not leaving us alone, He is teaching us to trust Him alone, so that all other lesser, false supports, fall away and are no longer able to get in the way of Him accomplishing all of His promises in our lives. Where is your heart at in your wilderness wandering, trusting G-d or still relying on inferior sources of lesser strength?

(3) **8:3: He humbled you and caused you to suffer from hunger and He fed you with manna, which you knew not and which your fathers had not known in order that you would learn that man does not live by bread alone but man shall live from all which comes out of the mouth of YHVH.** How is your spiritual diet coming? His Word is a banquet for those who know how to feast on it. Is your heart in feasting mode or are you still scrambling after other people's scraps, when He has set a full table for you?

(4) **10:16, 17: You shall circumcise therefore your heart and you shall not stiffen your neck. For YHVH your G-d is the G-d of gods, the L-rd of Lords, the great G-d, strong and fearsome and who has no favouritism and who does not receive any bribes.** Circumcision is a voluntary, permanent commitment that involves pain and a stigma, but its benefits are far outweighed by the blessings of the L-rd - and here I am talking about your heart, so you ladies are included.

He cannot be bribed or bought off, He shows no favourites (except for those who follow His Word and His Spirit), He wants to be obeyed and served without reserve and without compromise – as we glide towards the end of a hot, sunny summer is this where your heart is at?

Haftarah: Is. 49:14-51:3

(5) **49:16: See, I have inscribed you (carved you) upon the palms of my hands and your walls are forever before Me.** G-d will never forget you, how are you making sure that you will never forget Him or His Word (or His Spirit)?

(6) **49:25: Yes, says YHVH, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken from him and the prey of the tyrant shall escape from him; I will fight your enemies and I will save your children.** Doesn't matter how much the heathen rage (gay rights, abortion, evolution),

what really matters is how strongly we are convinced in our hearts that He is always on our side. Where is your heart at – full of confidence or needlessly cringing in fear?

Brit Chadashah: Heb. 11:8-13

(7) **11:13: It is by faith that they are all dead, without having obtained that which was promised; but they saw them and saluted them far away, recognizing that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.** What do you see far off (in ten years, in fifty years, one hundred years)? What are you saluting far off? We need life goals beyond financial, social or political – all of these things are temporary conditions of our pilgrimage and are not worthy of our long term, permanent attention. Where is your heart at and what has got your permanent, long term attention?

(Jill p. 177) **Ps. 97** Jewish Hero: Melchizedek (righteous people should always be our heroes and role models)

Sermon: **Strong Opinions Without Arguments**

Passage: **2 Timothy 2:22-26: Flee the passions of youth and seek for righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call upon the L-rd with a pure heart. Refuse stupid and senseless controversies knowing that they give birth to quarrels. And the servant of the L-rd must not quarrel; on the contrary, he should be kind to all, able to teach, gifted with patience; correcting opponents with patience in the hope that G-d would give them repentance so as to arrive at a knowledge of the truth, and that having returned to their good senses, they may escape from the snares of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.**

We live in a world where strong religious opinions are frowned upon if they do not uphold popular concepts of spirituality and morality. Recently an unbalanced orthodox man crashed the Jerusalem Gay Pride parade and stabbed several people and the world media is manipulating this tragedy to assume two things. First that all religious opposition to homosexuality (lesbians, transgender, bisexual and other sexual abominations) is both primitive and violent and especially unreasonable and deeply wrong and that all those who oppose homosexuality have got deeply seated violence issues, without any real intellectual or scientific basis to their refusal to accept SSA (same sex attractions).

Now, take a deep breath, the tyrannosaurus is not about to rant and rave against this horror or its cousin, abortion (any attempt to terminate a pregnancy after conception), but I want to use these two burning issues to discuss with you how we can and should hold strong opinions without always allowing these views to degenerate into perpetual heated arguments.

I want to use our passage to outline the nature of a truly biblical strong opinion and to discuss how this can be shared without violence, either physical or verbal. And in order to do this, I want to go backwards today and discuss how we can agree to disagree, even within our Messianic Community which places a high premium on authentic biblical teachings.

We are affiliated with the UMJC (Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations) and acknowledge their wisdom in many matters, both theological and moral. There are central issues where there is no room for flex (five fundamentals and our refusal to cave in before any form of

replacement theology – also called supercessionism), and we need to draw a circle around these fundamentals and distinguish between those who are adopting positions within the circle of authentic faith and those whose rejection of these fundamentals places them outside the circle of authentic biblical faith.

We have developed a clear statement of faith in our constitution and have designed ways of conducting our congregational business (and leadership/membership) which uphold the highest standards of biblical faith and practice and yet, without being wishy washy or making doctrinal or moral compromises, we allow for a certain amount of difference of opinion within the circle of biblical faith which we uphold.

Now I am not going to outline all of these issues and explain the difference between an acceptable difference and an unacceptable one – that is better suited to a Yeshiva Bible Study or a quarterly congregational meeting. What I would like to outline to you is the principle under which the UMJC conducts its business.

On certain issues (the ordination of women, the use of alcohol – and cigarettes – theories about the end of the world and who may wear a Tallit) each congregation and region has to recognize that there is a majority and a minority position. As long as what is taught falls on this spectrum, there is room for discussion, disagreement and growth and never cause for dissension and quarrelling.

An example of a discussion which is dear to my heart is a definition of our hope of everlasting life. The spectrum goes from narrow hope (only for those who have said the sinner's prayer and have accepted the L-rd into their hearts in Jesus' name at some time during their lives) to broad hope (all of mankind shall be saved because we are all born with His image and the blood of the cross applies to all mankind, regardless of what we believe or what we do) and I tend towards broad narrow hope (all those who would have accepted the L-rd Yeshua if they could have, are treated the same as those who actually did, however, final entrance into Heaven is decided exclusively by the final judgment of Messiah Yeshua, because there is no other way to G-d except through Him).

The majority position can be narrow and the minority position can be broad narrow, but never just broad hope. Within the circle of faith, there is room for differing opinions as long as it can be demonstrated that such differences are supported by the teachings of the Bible and do not contradict or undermine the supremacy of G-d's Holy Word either theologically or morally.

There is only one G-d who has never changed, nor ever will and He is the ex nihilo (out of nothing) Creator who holds the universe in the palm of His hand. He is a trinity (echad) and all understandings of G-d which do not uphold this biblical view are deficient and wrong, no matter how sincerely they are believed or widely these beliefs are held. There is no room for a majority or a minority position when it comes to the trinity of G-d (omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and immutable).

However, when it comes to a six day creation or an instantaneous one, figuratively described as six days, you have a majority position (six day) and a minority position (instantaneous). The same is not true of the universal flood in the days of Noah because the Scriptures teach this reality of a universal versus a local flood.

Did our people cross the Red Sea (majority position) or the Sea of Reeds (minority position)? Are the charismatic gifts for everyone (majority position) or only for certain individuals in our midst (minority position).

I would argue from the Scriptures, that there is no room for any acceptance of abortion, unless the life of the mother or the child is in danger and every effort is made to preserve both lives. I would also argue, from the Scriptures, that all and any form of sexual deviance is entirely unacceptable, but that there is room for the sexually broken in our midst as they seek to live a spiritually and emotionally fulfilled life free from any expression of their brokenness.

How about the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes? How about the non medical use of marijuana? How about a socialist versus a capitalist government and a republican government versus a monarchist government?

A strong biblical opinion has as its singular objective to uphold biblical standards of doctrine and morality, and yet desires to extend mercy and forgiveness to those who fall short of this stance in order to bring them to the place where they can learn this level of freedom and spiritual fulfilment. When we encounter disagreement, we first need to establish whether this disagreement occurs within or outside the circle of fundamental biblical truth, then we have to build a dialogue and find out what it is we are really disagreeing about.

We then need to outline the biblical options and see if we can establish a majority and a minority position and then we need to look at our sources and learn to grow in our knowledge of the Bible and in our appreciation of other people's in-house opinions.

When people are prone to argue and always want to show us how we are wrong and that we are right only when we agree with them, they are not holding onto acceptable strong opinions. They are fostering arguments which bring us and them under the control of the enemy whose goal it is to destroy faith in what the Bible says and in the morality it teaches.

We need to pray for such people and make sure it is understood that at B'nai Chayim, gentleness, patience and healthy, friendly discussion is possible within the circle of fundamental biblical faith and that we will avoid arguments as strongly as we avoid youthful lusts and foolish questions.

This is a high objective, but it needs to form the core of how we relate to each other in our shul, both among the leadership and among our youth and young marrieds and our seniors and our singles.

There will always be ongoing discussions where we disagree, but as long as we agree that the Bible is the final authority both in the theology it teaches and the spiritual morality it upholds, then we can relate to a darkening world without bringing its darkness into our midst. Arguing is never profitable, and must be avoided at all costs.

Sometimes this means shutting down a discussion, not necessarily because of what is being discussed, but because of the way it is being discussed. A lack of patience can turn a discussion into a fight and open a door to all kinds of disorder, hurt feelings, fights, character assassinations and gossip. Each of these futile disagreements are portals which open the door wide to the enemy, divide the flock and destroy our witness before the world – and distract us from our real work – to love the L-rd as we dig into His Word and to proclaim His

love and forgiveness to a lost and dying world.

I want to develop strong, wholesome, biblical opinions and share them within the circle of fundamental biblical truth with others who are also so inclined, because this is the calling of a servant of the L-rd.

I am extremely allergic to scent of any kind and I am also allergic to stinks of any kind where yelling and bullying occurs as the enemy ravages the ranks of believers who have not learned how to build, defend and share, strong opinions.

We live in a world where our faith is increasingly challenged and where most people think they have demolished our view of the world. We live in a world where there are so many spiritual counterfeits which want to infect and undo our faith (and our spiritual morality). We live in a world where too many believers are bent on biting and devouring each other and where others are abandoning both our faith and our spiritual morality and think they are serving the L-rd.

In the midst of the misinformation overload we have to deal with and all the kinds of opposition we encounter too frequently, we need to understand that the real problem is not having strong opinions and the solution is not continually backing down and accepting all and every opinion. We need to learn how to be strong in our biblical opinions without slipping into the carnal counterfeits of endless arguing and becoming the king of a fool's castle.

As we approach our annual voyage through the High Holy Days and Sukkoth we need to look at both the strength of our opinions and how we defend them and share them. We need to make sure that we are firmly within the circle of faith and that we will not be drawn into foolish disputes and needless arguments by those who are functionally serving the enemy in our midst, as we establish majority and minority positions with the circle of biblical faith.

How good are your strong opinions? How biblical? How good are you at avoiding arguments? How skilled are you at shutting down arguments? May the L-rd grant us strength and not disputes as we serve Him and do not give the enemy access in our midst.