

Bo Enter Remembering The Cost of Our Freedom

Torah: Exodus 10:1-13:16

This portion deals with the final chapter of the year long struggle between YHVH and the false gods of Egypt. After the darkness is lifted, Pharaoh makes his final threat to Moses – if you appear again in my presence, you shall die! In spite of this Moses appears again and informs Pharaoh that the first born of all the kingdom shall die if he does not let the people go – and Moses leaves Pharaoh's presence in great wrath. The children of Israel make their final preparations for leaving, from the first of the month of Nissan until the evening of the 14th of Nissan. They are told how to eat the Passover meal – with their shoes shod and their walking sticks in hand. Is your life packed and are you ready to go when the Groom returns?

The first Passover had two special features which we remember but which are no longer in force: circumcised and the blood on the doors. The Egyptians were not stupid and the threat on the first born was made in public, so it was well known. Some Egyptians may have thought to put blood on their door posts, without actually joining the community, but the destroyer had to see two things in order not to strike down the first born: the blood (from the meal which was being eaten) and circumcision.

The Seder is to be a sign on our hands and between our eyes, but we do not put the blood on the doorposts and for the remembrance, Gentiles are who are not circumcised are welcome to participate as guests.

The scene is set for the passing of the destroyer and the Jewish people borrow ritual vessels and clothing from their neighbours as the final showdown approaches. The meal is to be eaten with the guts intact, which would prevent any of it from being kept as leftovers and the people are to stay indoors until after the death sentence is carried out. Pharaoh summons Moses and capitulates – go and bless me and from this moment onwards, the first born of the children of Israel belong to the L-rd for two reasons.

First of all, we are His first born whom He redeemed and second of all, our first born are also His, so that we never forget the price which was paid to set us free – and which price was also paid thousands of years later when His first born Son died on the cross to deliver us from the Egypt of this world. From this point on, once a year, we are to remember the exodus and explain to our children why we perform this memorial of remembrance. It is to be like a sign on our hands and between our eyes so that each generation of our children personally own this deliverance once a year until the kingdom comes.

In fact the Last Supper was a Seder and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will also be a Seder. The first one is terrestrial and the last one will be celestial for those who belong to the King and who have been washed by His blood so that death can no longer touch us. For us we remember the double cost for our double freedom.

We were set free from Egypt and we are set free from the Egypt of this world. We remember this once a year, and for us once a month. As Messianic believers, Jewish and Gentile, we therefore celebrate three meals. Once a year we remember the Exodus with a full meal ritual

deal. Once a month we remember the sacrifice of our Messiah with a simple ceremony to commemorate the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood. And once at the end of the age, we shall eat a final cosmic Seder in the Kingdom when all abominations have ceased and all enemies have been put under His footstool. We need to be wise virgins who keep oil in our lamps and not foolish virgins who do not live lives which are ready to go when He calls.

Haftarah: Jeremiah 46:13-28

Just as the gods of Egypt were judged along with those who trusted in them, so there is also coming a final judgment of all the false gods of all the nations and generations of mankind, so that the people of G-d, the Jacob of G-d (composed of Jews and Gentiles) can finally cease our generational pilgrimage and enter into the eternal land of our rest, where we will never be disturbed again.

Brit Chadashah: Romans 9:14-29

We are all clay pots which the L-rd can do with as He pleases and there will always be an element of great mystery in the election of G-d according to His predetermined selection, but there are two truths which we should underline from this portion this week. First there is a selection process where candidates are selected by G-d from both Israel and from among the nations and the sign of this selection is repentance (faith and obedience). Now we know that there are going to be some last minute surprises, where some who appeared to be selected will be rejected and those who appear to be rejected will be selected, because only G-d knows what is in our hearts.

However, the signs of selection do not change: faith and obedience, not so that we become vessels which are only clean on the outside or tombs which appear alive but are really dead, but so that we remain salt and light as we remember the unchanging nature of the call of our invitation. Repentance is the sign of our acceptance of the invitation and obedience is the wedding garment which true guests are to wear and it is also the oil which wise virgins keep their lamps filled with.

Sorting out your spiritual life, in terms of faith and obedience, is the singular most important activity we can engage in, both as we come to faith and first put the blood on the doorposts of our hearts and as we remember our deliverance annually and monthly, both in the Seder and the L-rd's Table and in the life we lead in between times. We need to live with our feet shod and our walking sticks in our hands, as we make sure that our primary spiritual connection is to Him and His coming kingdom and not to this world which is passing away. How connected are you (faith and obedience)? Do you live ready to go? What are you remembering and what is really important to you? Peaceful, patient waiting is the only way to live.

(Marie pp. 171, 173) **Ps. 77** Jewish Hero: Children of Levi. Torah Carrier: John Barsy
Sermon: **Membership, Our Heavenly Bond with Messiah**

Passage: John 17: 20-23: ***It is not for them alone that I pray, but also for those who will believe on Me through their word, in order that all will be one, as You Father, You are in Me, and as I am in You, in order that all would be one in us, so that the world would believe that You sent me. Me in them, and You in Me – in order that they would be perfectly one and that the world would know that You sent Me and that You have loved***

them as You have loved Me.

This month is membership month as we prepare for our AGM on Saturday, February 27 and publicly acknowledge those who have made this vital step in becoming committed participants in our community. We welcome all and any visitors and rejoice with everyone who wants to find a spiritual home in our midst, whether as members or as adherents. However, as we prepare for growth and as we develop our various ministries and our outreach, we want to build a committed core of people who share this vision with us.

Last week, I spoke with you about what membership looks like (identification, commitment, accountability and intimacy) and over the next few Shabbats I am going to be examining various aspects of our membership in a Messianic Jewish context which is open to both Jews and Gentiles in our shul!

I had several excellent passages to choose from as we talk about membership as our heavenly bond with Messiah and I make no apology that what we are going to be talking about is a mystery which I will describe, but which no one can fully understand. As Messianic believers who hold the words of the Bible to be true, we acknowledge that our G-d is One G-d who exists in three persons: the Father, the Son (Messiah) and the Holy Spirit. This is the unfailing testimony of the Torah, the Prophets, the Holy Writings and the New Testaments.

I have an interesting volume in my library which outlines several thousand passages in the Bible which allude to the trinity of G-d, without ever crossing over into the error of believing in three separate gods. He is our G-d, singular, indivisible, and eternally unchanging. As He is, He always was and forever shall be and no one shall be able to fully understand this incredible mystery until the kingdom comes and we see it with our own eyes.

Bottom line, we acknowledge that the clear, undisputed teachings of the entire Bible proclaim this mystery about the triune nature of the One G-d. There are some who struggle with this reality and they usually come to one of a number of false conclusions. There are some who say the Son is not fully divine and is therefore inferior to the Father. There are others who take a different approach and say that G-d was the Father, who later became the Son and is now the Holy Spirit – sort of like a theological metamorphosis, where the divine egg became a saviour caterpillar and is now a spiritual butterfly (it is called the modality approach or oneness teaching). These teachings may appear to be defending the oneness of G-d, but they ignore the consistent testimony of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. There has always only been one G-d and He never changes – and He wants to change us!

This brings us to another weird and wonderful error that some believers have fallen into. Two groups I know of teach that once we become believers, we somehow become part of the godhead. They say that when we are born again, we become born again gods under the leadership of G-d the Father. Our Mormon friends go even farther and have a saying which makes what is left of my hair stand up on end because it is so false, even though they try hard to make it sound reasonable: As man is, G-d once was and as G-d is, man shall one day become. The Bible clearly teaches that humanity is never exalted to become part of the Godhead. G-d is as He always has been and does not change and while we are welcomed into His presence for eternity, at most we become perfect reflections of that eternity, because the G-d of the Bible whom we serve is changeless (immutable) and has been perfect and complete from forever!

There are any numbers of confusing variations of this key teaching of the Scriptures and I only touch on them as a form of inoculation against the false teachings which seem to rear their ugly heads in every generation of both the church and the Synagogue. What does it mean then that we become one with our Messiah? This is not an easy concept to develop and I just want to touch on some of the aspects of this wonderful truth and invite you to bring your questions to Yeshiva or even email them to me and then I could deal with this teaching at greater depth.

Briefly, when we come to faith, we do not just adopt a series of teachings or become part of a theological system that we come to believe in. You see, our people did not encounter some kind of force or power which they were taught how to manipulate, like the Jedi in Star Wars. They encountered a Person, who while He is also omnipresent (and omniscient and omnipotent), He is also a living Being, a Person who both rules over His creation, but is also separate and distinct from it. There is no mother earth (pantheism) or a series of distinct entities who each rule some aspect of the universe (polytheism).

Our G-d instructed His people to build Him a sanctuary (tabernacle) so that His presence could dwell in our midst. When the time was right, He Himself came down and dwelt in our midst. He lived, died, rose and ascended and one day this same Saviour G-d shall return and when we put our faith in who He is and what He did, in a very real sense, we become a sanctuary and His presence takes up residence in our hearts and shines our into our lives.

Yeshua is both the glue which holds the cosmos together by His word, He is also our permanent connection with the Father. He remains the head of the body which we all become part of. He is the groom, we are the bride. We become part of the Heavenly Jerusalem and He is that part of the divine presence which plugs us into the Eternal light which we will reflect forever.

So membership has amazing spiritual components which all believers encounter the moment they come to faith and invite the presence to take up residence in their hearts and lives. He remains the chief Cornerstone upon which we, as living stones, are built up into an eternal dwelling place for that same presence which appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and which Moses encountered through the burning bush and on the holy mountain.

Various prophets have had visions of this wonderful spiritual reality and it is described in various ways throughout the whole Bible. But there is only one G-d and in our Messiah, we become one with the Messiah, who is one with the Father.

In the beginning when G-d made us in His image, we did not become absorbed into that presence and as it was, it will always be forever, without changing. In order for finite, frail human beings to dwell forever in that presence, there had to be a permanent link between our finite humanity and the infinite wonder of the presence of G-d. Yeshua is our human connection to the Father because He has two natures, one human and one divine.

His divinity took on a human nature and tabernacled, or camped among us to win eternal salvation and forever defeat the power of sin, the world and the enemy. He is alive today and is interceding for us in the centre of the true presence of G-d, ministering to the true altar and from the true mercy seat. When you accept the L-rd – when you come to believe in Him, as a

Jew or as a Gentile, something really amazing occurs that I cannot really explain in terms of the actual physics or the metaphysics which are involved.

We become members of His body and are one with Him as He is one with the Father and this is an eternal bond, which remains invisible in this life, but which shall become revealed when He returns and establishes His eternal kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind in the heavens and on the new earth.

The moment you become a believer and initiate a relationship with the Divine person, through His Son, our Messiah and Saviour, you instantly become a member of an eternal family under the headship of G-d the Son. You cannot reduce this relationship to a system or to a formula. He is never a force you can control or manipulate, He remains the Divine Person with whom we have initiated a permanent relationship, both in this life and in the one which is to come. There are features of this relationship we have to learn about and grow in and there are rules to follow, so that we do not lose this relationship or allow it to lapse into some kind of coma.

As those who understand the wonder of this reality we want to explore all the features of our membership with the Messiah from Nazareth and first and foremost our membership is with the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Son is one with the Father, we become one with the Son, without either becoming part of the Son or acquiring a part of the divinity of the Father.

There are other features of membership which I want to deal with over the coming weeks, but just as the Messiah is the keystone, the chief cornerstone of the eternal tabernacle of which we are living stones, so this membership remains our heavenly bond with the Messiah, and with the Father through the Messiah. Have you become a member of this heavenly corporation by personally inviting the eternal presence of G-d through His Son into your heart? This is the unshakeable spiritual reality upon which all other aspects of our membership are built. Join us as we examine all aspects of our spiritual identity in our beloved Messiah in the coming weeks.