

2 Kislev, 5776 (14/11/15) **Yizkor: The Power of Memory to Heal** J. M. Terrett

**Toldot**                      **Generations**                      **Two Brothers: Two Destinies**

**Torah:**                      Genesis 25:19-28:9

This portion first speaks of the birth of the terrible twins when Isaac was sixty (20 years after he married Rebekah). It speaks of Isaac's obedience to G-d in taking refuge in the land of the Philistines, rather than going down to Egypt and the trouble he has finding a place to settle. The portion also deals with Jacob "stealing" his elder twin's birth right and becoming the one through whom the promises and the covenant of Abraham would be fulfilled. The story ends with Jacob being sent to Charan to get a wife so that he does not follow the bad example of Esau who has begun to assimilate into the Hittite culture. When he saw that his brother was obedient and was blessed he performed a partial obedience and married the daughter of Ishmael's oldest son, thus opening himself up to another kind of assimilation away from the promises of G-d. Our choices are important and our mistakes can be corrected, but both of these activities need to be based on a complete obedience to the Scriptures – half measures may slow down our assimilation into the world, but only complete obedience based on complete faith in the promises will protect us and our destiny from the assimilation of defeat.

**Haftarah:**                      Malachi 1:1-2:7

This long passage deals first with Esau as the one G-d rejected in favour of His people. It then outlines the consequences of disobedience, both moral and sacrificial. The L-rd says we would not treat our secular authorities with the same level of disrespect because they would not accept flawed offerings. Twice the passage declares that G-d is great beyond the frontiers of Israel among the nations. It ends with a poignant reminder of G-d's reaction to flawed obedience, which is just a cloned form of disobedience. He will curse and not bless and will throw the excrements of our offerings in our face, because that is what we have done whenever our obedience is flawed and our lives are compromised. Esau chose the route of assimilation and partial disobedience and his destiny was decided by these compromises of assimilation. Walking with the L-rd is never a guarantee that we will not encounter resistance and troubles, but it is a guarantee that we will not lose our way, because only the way of Jacob's faithful obedience leads home. We should not lose our way like Esau did.

Romans 9:1-13

Paul outlines his distress with the generation of the House of Jacob which did not respond to the arrival of Messiah with faithful obedience. He never insinuates in any way that G-d has rejected His covenant people and he brings in the example of Esau to demonstrate his point that not all those who are physical descendants of Abraham are heirs of the promise, only those who embrace the faithful obedience of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Our primary focus should always be to reach out to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, because the wonder and the power of the Gospel belongs to them first and foremost. We should never allow their rejection of the promises to cause us to follow suit and reject them. One of the greatest signs of our covenant obedience will always be our unconditional love of Israel, as we call them home to their spiritual destiny in our beloved Messiah, the only true King of Israel and of the nations. Two brothers with two destinies - which one will you choose?

(Gill p. 149) **Ps. 36** Jewish Hero: Asnath, Potiphar's daughter. Torah Carrier: Aaron  
L-rd's Table YIZKOR (candle lighting, readings and Kaddish)

**Sermon: Yizkor, the Power of Memory to heal**

**Passages: Remember and do not forget how you angered YHVH your G-d in the wilderness. You have been rebellious against YHVH from the day you left Egypt until you arrived here. (Deut. 9:7) Do not think any longer about the former things and do not dwell on what happened long ago. It is I, I, who erase your transgressions because of my love for you and I do not remember your sins any more. (Isaiah 43:18, 25) Remember Yeshua HaMashiach, a descendant of the posterity of David who was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. (2 Tim. 2:8).**

Today we observe both Yizkor and the L-rd's Table and I want to talk to you this morning about the positive power which memory can have to heal us and to release us from the pain and power of the past. The passages which I have selected today speak of three aspects of memory which our people were encouraged to embrace as they walked with the L-rd throughout the generations.

First we are told not to forget past mistakes so that we do not repeat them. Israel did not have a positive time wandering in the wilderness, but it was not because they lacked anything, since all their physical needs were met. It seemed when it came time to make positive decisions to walk in faithful obedience, they were often too busy grumbling, complaining and finding fault and Moses is reminding them not to make the same bad choices once they enter into the land of Promise. We need to remember not to make these bad choices!

We know from the Scriptures that their rebelliousness followed them into the Promised Land and the form it took most frequently was complaining and fault finding. You see, instead of seeing the challenges which presented themselves as opportunities to exercise faithful obedience they seem determined to focus on what could go wrong or what they did not like, instead of seeking the L-rd and finding ways to obey and get the job done, cheerfully.

We need to remember and not forget that being negative is too easy a trap for us to fall into. We need to be solution conscious and not problem focused. Memory can remind us that failure is the product of our attitudes and our habits, more than it is a product of the challenges which we face. Israel has never yet encountered an adversary capable of doing her any substantial harm, but over the centuries she seemed bent on self-destruction, generation by generation. In every situation and with every challenge we face, we need to ask ourselves whether we are going to learn from the negative example of Israel and not follow suit or whether our own negative choices will sink us. In the final analysis it is up to us to choose to remember and not to forget that what we choose and how we choose will have more of an impact on our lives than any of the situations or challenges which we encounter. There are biblical, divine strategies for us to adopt daily and constantly if we do not want to self-destruct spiritually by letting our guard down.

Well, not all of the memories we have of the people we are displaying on our memorial tables are positive and pleasant, and though we need to learn from negative or bad examples, we are not to focus on failure as much as we are to focus on forgiveness and cleansing. The day of G-d's final judgment has not yet arrived and while those who have fallen asleep can have no more impact on how they are to be judged (there are no second chances after death, only consequences, both good and bad), we can remember to keep short accounts with G-d in our own lives. We can only take the contents of our hearts to Heaven with us and rather than

focus on regrets and failures, we need to see how aggressively the L-rd wants to release us from the power of sin in our lives and teach us faithful obedience.

There are many events in my life which I remember with joy and others which I remember with regret, but just as we need to learn to choose how we respond to the events of our lives, we also need to choose how we remember both the events of our past and the people from that past. When regret comes calling we need to lift it to the L-rd and ask Him how He wants us to relate to it in the power of His forgiveness. There are some things which we need to make right, but there are also things which we cannot make right in this life but which should not be allowed to stop us from walking fully and freely with our L-rd in this life, cleansed and empowered to overcome and not to be overcome!

I miss my parents and many of the friends and family whose pictures adorn our memorial tables. Yes, there are things which I could have done differently and there are even things which I should have done differently, but in our Messiah we need to learn to turn all of this into lessons where we learn the power of His forgiveness and do not cave under the weight of futile regret. What we give to Him disappears and we never have to deal with it again.

Our world has known some very sad and even cruel events and when I read history, some of them still trouble me, especially when I consider how many innocents have been slaughtered. This should never turn us into modern jihadists visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children. It should turn us into disciples of the L-rd who will do their level best to resolve all the issues they can and who have the wisdom to turn over all unfinished business to our mighty L-rd and Messiah.

He wants to forgive and reaches out to motivate people to release their sinfulness and be cleansed, because even the most defiled can be forgiven. Our approach to judgement needs to aggressively remain forgiveness based judgement. Our L-rd takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, no matter how much they deserve it. There is coming a day when all the wrongs will be righted and all the world's chickens will come home to roost.

Our job is to focus on being forgiven as we learn faithful obedience and turn the negative examples of our world into reminders that we are not called to judgment and condemnation, but to forgiveness and justification – which is another word for revitalized faithful obedience. We do not have to remain dirty or defiled and we are certainly not called to wallow in guilt and condemnation. Just as G-d repeatedly forgave His people and called them back to walking with Him, so our use of remembrance ought to call us back from darkness to the light of His Holy Word, time and time again. Set free from sin and guilt is how we are to walk through life. What are you remembering? How are you remembering it? What impact does this remembering have on how you live your life? Do you suffer from spiritual PTSD?

My last passage deals with our need to remember why our Messiah came and what He accomplished for us and for all the nations and generations of mankind. G-d is active in the lives of all mankind to call them to the place of cleansing and wholeness and that place is found in faith in the crucified and resurrected Messiah from Nazareth.

We live in a world which is increasingly turning its back on G-d and on faith as a source of healing and comfort in our confusing and complicated modern world. This does not mean that our G-d is in any way unable to still forgive and transform people, just as He did when our

Messiah walked among us. We need to not be perturbed by our secular, spiritually insane world. Instead we need to remember that over 2,000 year ago the price was paid for all of us to be forgiven and transformed into those who have learned how to walk in faithful obedience.

This is the only show in town which matters and it should be the only thing which really matters to us. Our society is generating some fairly aggressive attacks on both our faith and on our spirituality and it would be too easy to be overwhelmed by the weight of their foolish, but articulate rhetoric. Instead we need to remain focused on the final victory over sin and death which our Messiah won for us and which will one day, forever, triumph over all the principalities and powers and ideologies which stand in its way.

We need to remember not to follow the negative example of Israel in the wilderness. We need to remember that forgiveness and not guilt is the key to overcoming the guilt which tries to disable our walk with the King of Glory. We are to call people to forgiveness and not to judgment. If they choose judgment, we should consciously determine to choose forgiveness and make sure that when it is our turn to stand before the King of Glory on that final day, our hearts will not be filled with darkness and sin, but with forgiveness and light.

Our Messiah took care of sin forever and He offers this forgiveness and this victory to us, generation by generation, even as we see the global righteous core shrinking and the darkness of the days of Noah again trying to spread out over the entire globe.

I often cringe when I watch the news and I have been known to yell at the TV, the radio and especially the computer. This is not because I am afraid of what is coming down the pipe, but because so much of it is needless and our world could fill up with the light of our Messiah's forgiveness no matter what rises up to stand in its way.

Our final victory is assured because of Messiah who died, rose, ascended and who is one day returning. No matter how thick or how intense the darkness becomes in our world, it will disappear and melt away at His coming. Therefore we need to choose to remember His final victory and never either lose heart or allow any of this darkness to invade our hearts and lives, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. May the power of memory set you free to walk in the light and be set free, time and time again from any darkness which wants to invade your heart or life. This is the power of memory we want to latch onto. Let's pray.