

4 Cheshvan, 5777 (5/11/16) **First Winter Series: Our Vision Statement** J. M. Terrett
What are You Looking At?

Noach **Noah (rest)** G-d's Ultimate Control Never Wavers.

Torah: Genesis 6:9-11:32

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-55:5

Brit Chadashah: Matt. 24:26-46

Reading: Sharon pp. 105, 107 Ps. 29 Jewish hero: Timothy. Torah carrier: Tom L-rd's Table

Torah Meditation:

The universal flood which occurred during the lifetime of Noah is a reality which should give us both confidence and should also serve as a warning, because G-d will never surrender ultimate control over the direction of human history.

The flood came about because the righteous core of humanity which descended from Seth, shrunk generationally until only eight people wanted to walk in the light and G-d rescued Noah and his family from the darkness which had flooded the world – and which we see is coming back in our days. It lasted slightly over one calendar year and even with the great volume of water which currently covers our world, there is still two or three times more water in the earth's crust. So we should not be afraid of global warming which could cause the water levels to rise, we should be afraid of the world who could still double or triple the amount of water which covers the globe.

Noah and his family gathered two of every species of unclean animals and seven pairs of clean animals and endured the storms which raged over the planet as the original single continent drifted into the continents we have today. They also witnessed the mountains pushing up as the weight of the water caused portions of the earth's crust to collapse, forming sea beds into which the massive amount of surface could flow.

Once the waters receded into their newly formed beds, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat and Noah released the animals and they gradually spread over the surface of the brave new world. How this happened and exactly how long it took for this to occur is not as important as understanding that it did occur and why it occurred.

To prevent the darkness from covering the earth happening too quickly again, G-d split mankind into at least 70 seminal people groups who were scattered over the globe and are only now forming back into a single global village. He selected one family group, the children of Abraham to act as the thread which would draw the righteous core from every nation and generation together, back into relationship with G-d.

The history of Israel is the L-rd offering both His people and all peoples the rest Noah found. The New Testament portion speaks about the end of the world using the days of Noah as a sign that this terminal event was on its way. As we begin a new annual Torah reading cycle, we need to understand that G-d has never surrendered His ultimate control over the direction of human history.

He is not slow in fulfilling the promises He made to us through our Messiah. He is active in the events of the world and speaking to all mankind, both individually and nationally (and internationally) offering them the same choice He has always offered mankind: come to faith and walk in obedience to His Word or stumble around in pagan darkness until you come to your senses.

This world may appear to be getting totally out of control and even our own governments may appear to be targeting our faith and trying to oblige us to accept what the Bible clearly teaches us is unacceptable. However, G-d's ultimate control never waivers and His control over us will not waiver as long as we do not listen to the pagan babel of this lost and darkening world which is saying and doing things which the Bible forbids and warns us against adopting.

We need to rest in the L-rd and trust Him as the darkness builds momentum because our faith will always be an ark of refuge which will rise up above the waves of darkness and prevent us from drowning in the vicious storms of life which are bursting upon our lost and foolish world. Noah found rest in the L-rd, are you finding rest in the L-rd?

Is your faith a seaworthy ark which rises above the darkness which surrounds us or it is beginning to leak and allow some of this pagan foolishness to seep into your life?

His ultimate control over the direction of human history will never waiver and may our faithful obedience to His word also never vary, so we can rise above these storms and walk peacefully with Him in the light as our age continues to crumble and slide towards the end of the world. All aboard – it may be full of animals, but it is the only ship afloat – are you floating or sinking, it all depends on the choices you make.

Sermon:

When our congregation got started, one of the first things we did was to select a name which would define who we are and the unique nature of our ministry. As we go into our long winter season, I would like to look at our vision statement, which describes what our names means for us as a community and also what it is we are trying to accomplish as we wander through this life on our way to our Father's Home in Glory.

This document was first put together at a special Leadership Meeting in 2007 and over the next few months, I would like to examine the four metaphors we came up with to make sure that our ministry was all about life as we continue to explore our vision in a unique Messianic Jewish context.

It is not always easy for people to understand what it means to be a Messianic Jewish Congregation and part of our ministry will always be to explain who we are and why we do what we do. So, buckle you seat belts, grab a copy of the Vision Statement and let's begin our exciting journey.

We are B'nai Chayim, Children of Life and our community is all about ministering the life of our Messiah in our darkening and often confusing world. We understand that there are two valid contexts where this life can be ministered, one Jewish and the other Gentile (Romans 1:16) and we have selected to explore this life and to minister it in a Messianic Jewish context.

We believe all that the scriptures teach about G-d and His coming kingdom and that means that both the great nation He brought forth from Abraham and the blessing to all nations He brought forth from our Messiah, the son of Abraham and the son of David are the only means of understanding what life is all about as we find our place in the purposes of G-d.

As both Jews and Gentiles, we are part of the generational community of Israel and also part of the one new man in our Messiah where both Jews and Gentiles share a common membership in the redeemed community along with all believers in every generation and nation of mankind, from our first ancestors until the last baby is conceived before the kingdom comes.

We share a unique vision of the world as a generational journey where the Father is working to reunite all the lost and wandering sons and daughters of Adam and Eve in our beloved Messiah and no matter what else is going on in the world, this is the final reality we live for and our hope will always be based in our faith in the coming kingdom, no matter who wins the election south of the border.

Our world is full of competing, contradictory visions of what the meaning of life is all about and it is our primary role to hold firm onto what the Bible teaches even as our global community moves away from a spiritual understanding of life and tries to impose a hostile secular view of the meaning of life. B'hai Chayim stands for life in our blessed Messiah and how we minister this life can be described with four metaphors which describe our four functions as we go about our Father's business in our darkening world.

One day, I would like to see a picture drawn which incorporates all four metaphors into a single integrated vision, but as we wait on this, let me briefly run through all four of them and then conclude today's service with my first explanation of the first metaphor.

We are first a **light house** which calls all mankind back to an understanding of life which centres around the coming kingdom and the end of the world. We want to warn people not to become shipwrecked and watch their lives crumble into meaninglessness as they give into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the ride of life. I believe more in the coming of the Kingdom that I do in the rising and setting of the sun each day which passes.

Like John the Baptist, we are warning people to flee from the wrath which is to come and to seek refuge under the wings of our Messiah as we see the final storm about to burst forth on the unsuspecting, blinded world which is entertaining and polluting itself to death. More about this later.

Next we are a **tree** which encourages believers to understand that they have been grafted in to the vine of the L-rd, either as natural olive branches or as wild olive branches and that the L-rd expects us to grow in Him and to bear fruit. By this we mean that we teach people to put off the old man who is full of corrupt, carnal foolishness and to be clothed with the new man who is being transformed by the Spirit of G-d into the image of our blessed Messiah, by the power of His Word and by the blood which He shed for us on the cross.

Sound biblical doctrine needs to be followed up with sound biblical spirituality and morality as we adopt the values of G-d's Kingdom and His righteousness and do not allow our faith to be

eaten up by the doubting birds of the enemy, or withered by the temptations of the flesh or chocked by the cares, the riches or the pleasures of this life. Too many believers slip in any number of carnal comas and do not grow in the grace and knowledge of the Messiah who has called out of darkness into His wonderful life. More about this in the coming weeks.

We are also a **bride** which celebrates our coming eternal union with the Groom as we praise and worship Him through the songs and dances we offer to Him daily, and constantly, as we cycle through the annual festivals of the L-rd and proclaim His wonder and Glory. Our spiritual life cannot always be about the battles which are raging around us for the hearts and souls of mankind.

In order to avoid battle fatigue, we need to take regular praise and prayer breaks where the wonder of who our Messiah is fills us with awe and joy as we celebrate the Father's goodness to us at every stage of our lives and in every circumstance of our lives. While we may not always be able to rejoice in the pain and confusion which may crop up in our lives and which is always cropping up in the lives of our lost and dying planet, we can always rejoice in the wonder of who the Messiah – G-d who was born into our midst and who defeated the powers of darkness and won everlasting life for all of us, to the Jew first and also for the Gentile.

Lastly, we are also a **repairman** which offers healing and restoration to believers who are damaged and who suffer loss during our pilgrimage through this life. We understand that His Word offers solutions to all and any of the problems we encounter, in any situation which we find ourselves in, in our pilgrimage through the cradle to the grave on our homeward journey to our Father's house.

The solutions may not always be to our liking and may involve lots of limping as we return again and again to the straight and narrow path, no matter how much loss we suffer and no matter how much resistance we encounter, both because of the folly of the world which surrounds us and because of the folly we personally add to the mix by bad lifestyle choices where we shoot ourselves in the foot.

We need all four functions to be working in harmony so that both as individuals and as a community, we never allow the life we have received to become dim and so that we never loosen our grip of it as we bounce along through life on our journey to our final home. Four functions which are the foundation of who we are and what we do:

The **prophetic function** which tirelessly proclaims the coming kingdom to our fading world.

The **discipleship function** where we stubbornly apply kingdom priorities to our daily lives.

The **worship function** where we constantly allow the joy of the L-rd to be our strength.

The **healing function** where He repairs any damage we incur as we walk through this life.

The bottom of our vision statement contains a mission statement which is a one sentence summary of our vision statement and which we will also expand on over the next few months. We want to know what it is that we are called to be doing daily and constantly so that we do not lose our way in any of the myriad rabbit trails which our world will endlessly try and trick us into following.

We offer an amazing full meal package deal and as we go through this first winter series, may the L-rd show you how you fit into our community and which aspects of our vision statement will engage to minister to you and enrich the life which we have all received from the L-rd, since, truly we are all B'nai Chayim, children of the life which He came and died and rose to give us as we wait for the final stage of His purposes as we see the kingdom coming closer and closer. What are you looking at? what are you waiting for?

And just by way of ending this first message in the series and as we prepare to celebrate the L-rd's Table, let me make three short statements about our prophetic function so that our lighthouse shines brightly and does not dim or crumble through the storms of life.

These statements can be described as relationship, reality and repentance. Many people cannot trace the moment when they came into a personal relationship with G-d through our beloved Messiah, but the consistent testimony of the Scriptures has this personal relationship as the primary objective of all that G-d wants to do in our lives, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Our faith is not some kind of religious system which we plug into to find peace and protection as we jog through this life. Our faith is a bold acknowledgement that there is only one G-d and that entering into a personal relationship with Him is the whole duty and privilege of mankind.

Have you entered into a personal relationship with the King who died on the cross to give you everlasting life? A lost and confused young man entered into a relationship with the King of glory nearly 45 years ago and I am still walking with Him, even if the road has frequently been bumpy and even painful at times. Entering into a relationship with the author of Life is how we become children of life and if we do not have this life, there is no real purpose to our lives and we are just putting in time before we return to the dust from which we were drawn.

Related to this is an understanding that the end of the world is coming and that nothing can stop this eventuality nor even slow it down AND it is not all about setting dates our even full grasping all aspects of G-d's perfect timing as much as it is peacefully and persistently learning to wait for its inevitable arrival. So, you will never see this pulpit try and reapply Old Testament prophecies in modern contexts which they were never given to describe.

Israel received promises and was given warnings and they basically all said one thing: walk with the L-rd in faith and obedience or He will chastise you and bring you back to this place, because this is only possible lifestyle for a believer. Prophecies were given which promised Israel's restoration and all of them depending on fulfilling specific conditions for them to be realized. So some of them were not fulfilled because Israel did not fulfil the specific requirements and we cannot fulfil these requirements and see them fulfilled, because that is not the lesson the L-rd wants us to learn.

Peppered throughout all the prophecies of the Bible is the one central theme – the coming kingdom and it is when we learn to live our lives according to these kingdom stipulations that we have learned the lesson which prophecy wants to teach us. The world is lining up for the final conflict as we speak and there is a great deception of darkness trying to cover the world once again. Instead of trying to reapply prophecies which were not given to us into contexts where they do not apply, we need to learn the lesson of prophecy and set our lives up for blessing by walking in faithful obedience, nothing more and nothing less.

Whenever our lives get stalled or sidetracked, we need to exercise a powerful weapon which G-d gives to believers – repentance, which simply means returning to the place from which we have fallen and learning to get a better grip so we do not act like unpredictable yo-yos.

Relationship, reality and repentance. How is your relationship doing? Are you living daily for the reality of the kingdom or are you second guessing yourself into spiritual oblivion? Repentance needs to be a constant way of escaping from the rabbit trails of life and returning to the straight and narrow, because this is the only way for children of life to live.

This morning we are also celebrating the L-rd's Table because this is first Shabbat of the Hebrew month of Cheshvan and the new moon is a time where Jewish people's hearts turn towards the redemption which is coming when Messiah sets up His everlasting kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind. Let us renew our commitment to kingdom life in our Messiah as we wait for His return, one day at a time.

Shabbat Shalom, campers.