

21 Tevet, 5779 (29/12/18) **Happy New Year: Another Year to Walk With the L-rd.** J. M. Terrett

Shemot **Names**

Torah: Exodus 1:1-6:1

Haftarah: Isaiah 27:6-28:13; Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

Brit Chadashah: I Corinthians 14:13-25

Reading: Hanna: p. 165 and Ps. 46 Jewish Hero: Oholiab. Torah carrier: Betty

Passage: *If anyone is in the Messiah, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone. I look forward to 2019, not because I am excited about what it could bring, but because I am excited about what the Messiah will do for us as we face another year. People in the world put their trust in hoping for the best possible outcome, but as believers in the Messiah we put our hope in the kingdom of G-d which is the inevitable reality over and above all the hopes and fears of all the years.

The new year becomes an opportunity for us to look at our lives and see how much the kingdom of G-d has become the focus we have as we walk through this world on our way to our Father's home in Glory. Our passage says that old things have passed away and that all things have become new and this is the reality which we celebrate as we anticipate what 2019 will have in store for us.

Old things refer to the flesh, the world and the enemy, which is all that we could hope for, before we came to faith in our beloved Messiah. In the world, we were left to try and get all we can and can all we got and then try and sit on the lid. Material success was the point of our lives as we tried to get the perfect body, the whitest teeth and the most amazing vehicle on the planet.

In the Messiah, everything has changed. Instead of looking for the best angle, we are now set free to look for the best way to serve the L-rd as we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. What was once so important to us, has become the least of our worries, because we have a higher destiny and we know that all the glory and power of this present age will pass away and leave no eternal trace behind it.

We have been set free from the limits of this age and we have our eyes on the age which is to come. We may have to pass through difficulties and see a lot of pain before the kingdom comes, but we know that all that comes our way is nothing but the birth pangs of the everlasting kingdom to which we now belong. Instead of trying to build a better world, we direct our energies towards the world which is to come.

We certainly want to do our best in the world in which we live, but our destiny is in the world which is to come, and we no longer hope for the things which this world can offer us.

We have a better hope and we live for a world which makes this one seem like just a passing dream that is not actually real. The question for us becomes how much of our lives in this world are spiritually real in terms of the world which is to come. We are just passing through this world and we do not want to become attached to it in any way.

What do the attachments of this world look like? John talked about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Paul drew a clear distinction between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. Our Messiah talked about the birds of doubt, the rocks of temptation and the cares and pleasure and riches of this life which want to prevent the seed of His Word from reaching its full spiritual potential.

As believers, we live by different rules and we have different objectives and the things of this world become less and less important as the things of the world to come become our reason for living. The question for us to ask ourselves becomes how much of how we live and what we hope for is connected to the world to come?

We are not called to sell everything we own and sit on our rooves, waiting for the L-rd to come and snatch us up. But we are called to surrender all that we own and all that we are, so that the world which is to come becomes our reason for living.

In literature, people talk about the theme of a particular story and about the message it is trying to communicate. Our lives need to become all about the world which is to come and not about the world we are merely passing through. This is a tall order and not every believer will succeed in this great task, but as we look back at where we have been in 2018 and where we want to be in 2019, we need to see that we have no other purpose than to live for the world which is to come.

Whether we prosper or whether we struggle, whether we enjoy perfect health or battle with sickness, whether we see our dreams come true or have to learn patience, it is only as we look at our lives in terms of the kingdom to come that we will have any real impact in 2019. Paul said that all things have become new and old things have passed away, but he did not mean that suddenly our lives were magically altered. He meant that the theme of our lives and the reason why we live have become radically altered and it is as if we had left this world and were suddenly fully in the world which is to come.

He was talking about that which is important to us and how we evaluate success and failure in our lives. Paul faced many challenges as he worked to share his faith in a world which was spiritually hostile to the message he was proclaiming, but he did not allow the resistance he encountered to tell him how to live. We are citizens of the world to come who are merely passing through this world on our way home and we have at least two sets of objectives to accomplish during this pilgrimage.

The first objective is to share our light and be salty as we speak the truth and endeavour to lead others to the truth of G-d's Word. People may not always be willing to listen, but when they see how we live and how we respond to life, they will be unable to ignore how different our lives are from theirs.

Paul said that wives who had unbelieving husbands could win them over without a word by the way they lived and how they responded to whatever life brought their way. We can adopt the same strategy and show people the reality of our faith by the way we live and by our willingness to give a reason why we are so different from the world through which we are merely passing through. We do not live for the same things as the dwellers of darkness and we certainly do not crave the same things which those who have no hope strive to obtain.

Whether we have plenty or whether we are living on a limited budget, the voice of our lives and the theme of our lives will be heard, whether or not our voices are listened to by those we want to share with. We have a reason to rejoice which those in the world cannot see or really understand and they may think that we are more than a little bit crazy because of our faith in the world to come. We are not chameleons who take their colour from their surroundings and who want to blend in and become part of what is currently fashionable, so that the world will pay us the attention it gives to those who walk by its rules.

What is important to the world around us should never be important to us as we travel towards our Father's home in glory and this is my second point. While our primary objective shall always be to shine as salty light and share our faith with our lost and dying world, there is also another objective we are called to fulfill.

We are not to become involved with what this darkening world finds important and we are called not to fill our lives with the fading treasures which this world clutters people's souls with. The prophet Jeremiah said that rich men should not boast about their bank accounts and wise men should not prattle on about their academic achievements. He even said that the strong and the powerful should not think that their elevated status really meant anything in the long run.

He said that what was really important, was to value the things which the Lord values and that is steadfast love, justice and righteousness. We are called to hold on to the things of the world to come and not to become burdened with things which really do not matter. I may be concerned with living an environmentally friendly life that wants to end poverty and make sure that hunger and oppression disappear in our lifetime. I may speak out against racism and strive to end injustice and corruption whenever I encounter it.

But none of these objectives is exalted enough for me to give my life to, because the problems of this fading world cannot compare to the glory which will be revealed when the coming kingdom breaks forth to bring this feeble life to a close. I always want to be a good person, willing to help anyone in need and I want to contribute to the healing of this painful world.

This is not because I am a champion of that which will always be fading away, but because I am a disciple of the light which will shine forever, once the shadows of this world have ceased to be.

In 2019, I want to shine and be salty and be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks me for a reason of the hope I have in the life which is to come. But I also want to be sure that none of the pride of life, nor the lust of the flesh nor the lust of the eyes, is able to take root and become part of the reason I live the way that I do.

I want to make a difference and I want to be different, not so that people will think that I am cool and stylish. I want to represent the kingdom and live so that people will see what the kingdom is all about. I may not always succeed, and sometimes I may falter, but my objective should always remain the same. I want to live a life where the fruit of the spirit grow and where the works of the flesh are not welcome.

Too many believers seem to learn enough spiritual vocabulary to make their anger and bitterness sound spiritual, while they bite and devour each other, whenever they do not get their own way. Our lives should be filled with an overcoming love of the L-rd where we take the things of the L-rd seriously and do not settle for any of the works of the flesh.

I know this is a tall order and that our flesh and the world and the enemy will always try to burden us with things which do not matter in terms of the world to come, but our objective in 2019 will not change as we learn to seek first G-d's Kingdom and His righteousness.

I cannot predict what will come our way as we prepare to face the coming year and I certainly do not wish anything but good for all of us and for each of us, but good wishes should not be what the coming year is all about. We may face great trials and we may even experience great personal setbacks, whether or not the proposed oil pipe line ever gets built. Our current provincial government may be replaced in the next election and our current federal government may change and actually consider the needs of western Canadians.

World markets may open up and some of the international violence we suffered in 2018 may actually be resolved. New cures for fatal diseases may be found and global warming may become less of a problem. But none of this really matters in the long run.

It is only the coming Kingdom of our blessed Messiah which has any substantial importance and we need to aim to make our lives revolve around this inevitable eventuality. How well will you shine in 2019? How salty will your life be in 2019? Will the fading shadows of this temporary life mean less to you in 2019? Will the spiritual objectives of the world to come be the focus of all that you hope for and work for in 2019?

Our Messianic community of Jews and Gentiles exists to proclaim the wonder of our Messiah to a world that is quickly fading away and this growing darkness will only accelerate in 2019. However, we do not belong to this world and we want nothing to do with what it considers to be important. Our objectives for 2019 remain twofold. First to seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of G-d in all that we do. Next to avoid becoming entangled with anything that this fading world has to offer. 2018 was a pretty good year. May 2019 be an even better year for all of us and for our shul.