

18 Adar I, 5779 (23/02/19) **2nd Winter Series Don't Slip into a Spiritual Coma** J. M. Terrett

Ki Tisa **When You Elevate His Magnificent Forgiveness**

Torah: Exodus 30:11-34:35

Haftarah: I Kings 18:1-39

Brit Chadashah: 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Reading: Hanna pp. 33, 35 and Ps. 75. Jewish Hero: David. Carrier: Ifeanyi

After the people have received the Ten commandments and have sworn to follow all the community jurisprudence it would require to apply the Ten into every area of their lives, Moses leaves Aaron and the elders in charge of the camp and climbs up the mountain. He spends forty days and forty nights on the mountain, which is a symbol for a painfully long period of time. He receives instructions for the construction of the ark and all of its furnishing, including the tent of meeting and also, he receives instructions on how the priestly garments are to be put together.

A lot has been said and a lot of speculation has been made as to why the people turned away from G-d and His Word so quickly. The Talmud blames it on the mixed multitude and on the sorcerers who yet dwelt in the midst of the people. This contention is not supported by the context of the passages in question. However, for me it is far more troubling that Aaron appeared to have caved in so quickly and participated in criminal idolatry with the people, instead of rebuking them and reminding them of their oath.

While Moses was receiving instructions on how to allow the marvellous presence of G-d to dwell in the midst of the people, they swiftly fall into criminal idolatry and even into criminal fornication. When it says the people rose up to play, that is a euphemism for sexual misconduct. It is likely that all the time Moses was on the mountain, it smoked and shook amidst lightening and thunder, so the people may have thought that Moses had got it wrong and had perished at the hands of the god who brought them out of Egypt. They may have wanted to set the record straight so they did not share the same fate.

When Aaron did not resist, but actually participated, along with the leadership, it looked like the idolatrous core had won out. I like to think of it as the last gasp of the Egyptian paganism which the people had adopted during their sojourn in that heathen land. What was more troubling than the people's backsliding, was the potentially lethal response of G-d who had both forbidden them to worship other gods and had also forbidden the construction of any idols to represent Him or other gods.

Since G-d's timing does not flow like our timing, YHVH was totally prepared to consume the rebels and to make of Moses a great nation. It might have taken another 400 years and it would not have included Aaron or any other member of the current camp. Moses and Joshua would have been left alone to find new wives and rebuild the nation which had so swiftly rebelled against the oaths which they had made before G-d.

Rather than working out any of the details of this proposition by the L-RD, Moses immediately begins to intercede on their behalf. He asks G-d to consider that Egypt and the other nations might say YHVH truly took the people into the wilderness to kill them, instead of beginning to fulfill the oath He had made to them to bring out of bondage and lead them into the Promised Land. G-d saw that Moses was prepared to still deal with the people and sent Him down there to deal with the fickle House of Israel.

We are not told whether his face shone at this point, but his wrath was enflamed and he first broke the two tables whose teachings the people had violated and then he burned their idol, reducing it to powder. He then poured this powder into some water which he made the people drink. They were being shown with no uncertainty that the idol they had made was not the G-d who brought them out of Egypt and they were made to drink humble pie and admit they were following a lie which had no power and it was annihilated.

Moses then confronted the compromised leadership who did nothing to stop the people. Aaron claims that the golden calf just popped out of the flames, even though previously we were told he fashioned a mould for it. YHVH was angry with Aaron and the leadership, but Moses gave them a chance to separate themselves from their folly and make a declaration that they were on the L-rd's side.

The entire tribe of Levi armed itself and ran through the camp, killing the ringleaders of this attempted takeover. They were not to spare anyone, even if they were close family members – which probably meant that some close family had abandoned the L-rd. This may also explain why they had caved in so quickly.

What happens next, occurs in the camp where G-d smites all those who had participated in making the golden calf, saying that the soul that sins shall perish, but the others would not share the same fate. He tells them that they are so stiff necked, that He cannot dwell in their midst and they are given the impression that the ark would never be set up in the middle of the camp on the way to Canaan. The people wept, took off their ornaments and removed themselves from the foot of Mount Horeb.

Moses set up his tent outside the camp and the people had to leave the camp to consult with the L-rd. They waited with patience and humility to see how complete the forgiveness of G-d would be – and the answer will always be that it will be as complete as the people's repentance and obedience. What happens next is one of the most amazing encounters with G-d in the Bible.

Moses is told that he will indeed see the glory of G-d, if only from behind, and he receives the promise that G-d will always accompany him on the way to the Promised Land. As the full glory passes, he will be hidden in the cleft of the rock and sheltered behind the covering hand of G-d – another symbol of our Messiah. Totally amazing!

He is also told to carve two more tablets of stone and when he climbs back up the mountain, G-d's glory passes before him and proclaims His name – and this proclamation is called the thirteen attributes which more fully outline the wonderful nature of G-d.

It is an awesome proclamation and contains the second major use of the symbolism of one thousand to describe His generational goodness towards those who walk with Him. It also outlines for a second time the limited shelf life of sin. Three or four generations refers to the living generations, because sin has to be accepted by those who are alive and cannot be passed on beyond the life span of the living. Each generation has to choose.

The L-rd goes on to make strong warnings against spiritual assimilation of any kind, and reminds the people that they are to gather around the ark three times a year, after their annual harvest times. They are to celebrate the goodness of the G-d who both promised to bring them into the land and to provide abundant harvests for them, once they settled in the land.

The L-RD rewrote the Ten Words on the new tablets of stone and this time, because it was a remaking of the previous covenant, it did not have to be sealed with blood and another ritual meal. The blood which sealed it may have been the blood of the rebels which was shed as a retribution and which the people did not resist.

From this point on, Moses face shone when he came out of the presence of the L-rd and he wore a veil before the people so they could look upon him and not be blinded by the light. The shining is always mentioned in reference to Moses climbing the mountain and going into the thundering cloud, so he could enter the presence of the L-rd. Once the people leave the mountain and begin their journey to the Promised Land, there is no more mention of Moses' face shinning. This was either because the people got used to this amazing phenomenon or it was of limited duration while they dwelt around the mountain.

The majesty of G-d's forgiveness always outshines the stupidity of our rebelliousness and sinfulness. The only way to deal with sinfulness is to repent and obey and trust the L-rd for His forgiveness, whenever we abandon our folly and firmly grab hold of His eternal Word. More about this in my sermon.

Sermon: Second Winter Series: Do Not Slip into a Spiritual Coma

Passage: "Do you not know, oh vain man, that faith without works is useless. Was not our father Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith works in concert with works and faith is perfected by works. Thus, it is fulfilled what the Scriptures say: Abraham believed in G-d and it was imputed to him as righteousness and he was called the friend of G-d. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. Was not Rahab, the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and made them depart by another way? As the body without spirit is dead, in the same way, faith without works is dead... If someone says: you, you have faith and me, I have works. Show me your faith without works and me, I will show you my faith, by my works."

(James 2: 20-26; 2:18)

The great protestant reformer, Martin Luther, said that our New Testament faith is built on three pillars: **sola gratia** (only by grace), **sola fide** (only by faith) and **sola scriptura** (only by the Scriptures).

He did not feel that James should have been placed in the canon of the New Testament, because he felt that James was advocating for salvation by works, apart from faith. While I agree totally with his three pillars of New Testament faith, I understand that he gravely misunderstood James and wrongly sets works in opposition to Faith or in competition with it. One is the outworking of the other and one cannot exist without the other.

Faith and works are two sides of the same coin and you cannot have one without the other. Works are the breath of faith, because they are faith in action. They are faith reaching out and actively touching and impacting our lives. Works are the active next stage of faith and without this active next stage of faith, faith has slipped into a coma of inactivity and is effectively useless. It has been blocked. It has been stopped and it has been chocked from the faith that wanted to send it forth as a practical expression of that faith.

The enemy has done a good job of alienating faith and works into two camps – the Calvinists and the Arminians – followers of Calvin and of Arminius. The first teaches that once you have accepted the L-rd, you are eternally secure and you cannot lose your salvation because you were chosen before the foundation of time. If you are part of the elect, you will come to faith. If you are not part of this elite group, there is no way you can come to faith, but are by nature condemned.

Arminianism says that the election is there for all and that the choice to receive or reject grace is made by us and not by our arbitrary predestination. We were born to choose and this is a choice which G-d gifts us with. They would go further and say that this choice has a period of testing to see if we will follow through on our faith and produce the works which our faith requires of us in order to be an authentic believer.

Arminianism agrees with James and says that faith is demonstrated by works and faith is perfected by works. Faith is the lungs of grace, works are the breath of faith and as such, the two are inseparable and work in tandem, so that the grace of G-d can work in our hearts and lives. Far too often people who claim to have faith, slip into a spiritual coma and choke that faith so that it brings forth no works.

Faith without works is chocked and strangled and works that have no faith are trying to earn that which is beyond the ability of our works to purchase. We remain G-d's workmanship, created for works which He has prepared for us to perform. Failing to perform them makes our faith still born and lifeless.

Faith could be described as a series of spiritual drives and urges which G-d, through His Spirit, plants in our hearts and lives. They are based, both on His image which we carry in our souls and on His Word which He has planted in our conscience. We live in a sin infected world and too often the sin which crouches at our door, takes residence in our

hearts and lives and pulls us down into darkness, away from the light which our inner man so strongly craves.

At some point, G-d intervenes, based both on His redemptive activities in the life of Israel and on the cross, when through our Messiah, Israel became a blessing to all the nations and generations of mankind.

Salvation was won for us – all of us, but is only made available if we abandon the darkness and come back to the light. It cannot be just lip service where we make a profession of faith that is not followed up on. Sometimes the birds of the enemy, the rocks of temptation, and the weeds of the cares and worries and pleasures of this life either remove the seed or render it inert and inactive.

This is not the kind of faith which is the saving faith the Scriptures speak about. This kind of inert and inactive faith is lifeless and James even calls it dead. This is not because the mighty power of G-d's is not sufficient to save us, or that somehow sin has defeated the grace of G-d. It is because the one who came to faith, chocked the life out of it by refusing to bring forth works worthy of salvation and this faith died on the drawing board of someone's heart and soul and never made it to the place of impacting that unfortunate person's life.

Now sometimes someone is not able to put much faith into action as works, before death overtakes them. These death bed confessions are better than nothing, but that is not what the Gospel is all about. It is all about faith which produces the works which are conceived by faith and brought forth and birthed by faith into tangible works.

Some come to faith and it takes them years to work through life issues such as abuse and addiction and come to the place where they can bring forth faithful works. Our job is to pray for them and love them, so that how we treat them, is not part of the problem which is keeping their faith bottled up in pain, fear and anger. Those who throw any little one's faith into stasis (pain induced coma), should have a millstone tied around their neck and be thrown into the depths of the sea.

May the L-rd preserve us from millstone behaviours and attitudes. The works of the flesh are millstone behaviours and the fruit of the spirit set people's faith free to soar into the heights and depths of His great grace and love. Don't let the works of the flesh infect your heart and life and trap you into millstone behaviours and attitudes.

Those who are mentally ill or mentally challenged fall into a special category and here I want to make a potentially controversial statement about the sexually broken. So many of them are victims of abuse and violence, who have caved into the pain and horror of what was done to them and they are the sexually disabled. My heart breaks for them and it is only when they falsely claim that their brokenness is normal or is a gift, that I get mad.

According to the teaching of our faith in the Scriptures, they are suffering from a form of sexual leprosy and we should not hate them, but reach out to them because contrary to the misleading statements of the politically correct dominated media, there are as many if not more, former gays, than there are gays who accept their lifestyle. And authentic therapy for unwanted SSA (same

sex attraction) has a success rate that reaches up to 60 %. This is not the gross forms of torture and electro-chock, chemical treatments which are horrible ways of treating people. These are the therapy-based healing of sexual wounding that restores sexual health to so many.

Some who are not set free, are set free from the delusional thinking of the gay community and learn to live celebrate lives, full of love and deep affection, without delving into fornication and abominable sexual immorality. Telling someone who is broken that their brokenness is a gift, is a form of abominable cruelty that too many liberal theologians have slipped into. They can whine as loud as they want and call me names like hater, homophobe or bigot, but sticks and stones may break my bones, but the truth will always set me free. I want to preach freedom and not acceptance of the abominable.

We are to love our enemies and forgive those who mistreat us and abuse us. Our faith requires an active works response in order to be healthy and not slip into a coma where there are no signs of life. Some choked and withered believers who have slipped into a spiritual coma, are loud and aggressively obnoxious as they drown in the works of their flesh, biting and devour each other into spiritual oblivion. This is not our calling as Messianic Jews and Gentiles. Faith filled works is our calling.

We are called to life changing faith, where our faithful works bring life changes to our lives and set us free from the power of sin and death. We are saved by faith which is active through faithful works. Neither works by themselves nor faith by itself can save us, it must be a two-sided coin, team effort, where faith empowers our works and where our works cause our faith to grow and deepen. They need to work together, not separately.

Paul said that there are three which remain: faith, love and hope. They never function in isolation to one another, but are aspects of the nature of G-d which we are born with and which was repaired and extended when the Messiah came to dwell in our hearts by faith. He smashed the power of cancelled sin and set our spirits free to practice the works which He has prepared for us to practice- especially since He works in us to give us to desire and the ability according to His good pleasure.

Some rave about faith to the exclusion of works and some emphasize works over faith. The Bible places them together where one is the outgrowth of the other and the other is the root from which the other one springs forth. James wanted people to avoid the trap of just having theoretical, sterile faith that does not produce changes in the attitudes and actions of our hearts and lives. He even said that the devils too have faith, but not the kind which can save them. Faith which produces works is the kind which saves.

Authentical biblical faith spawns a deep repentance in us and does not rest until faithful works overrun our hearts and lives and bring us totally into the light of G-d's Word, no matter how long this takes. What kind of faith is active in your life? Said another way, is your faith active in your life? Inactive faith is not saving faith. Faith which spawns works that foster the fruit of the spirit and remove the works of the flesh, is the kind of faith which we are called to and it is the only kind of faith which our Messiah finds acceptable. How acceptable is your faith? How are your works doing? Do they grow out of your faith or

are they there to vainly try and earn your passage to heaven, while your life is wallowing in the darkness of this world? Shalom and shavua tov.