

Chris Dahlberg will be giving us the Torah Meditation this morning.

Miketz Torah: At the End of Genesis 41:1-44:17
Haftarah: I Kings 3:15-4:1 (Zechariah 2:14-4:7- different versification, same content)
Brit Chadashah: Matt. 27:15-46
Reading Alan p. 153 and Ps. 40. Jewish Hero: Enoch. Carrier: Betty

Since this is the last time that I am going to speaking with you in 2019, I wanted to go out with a bang and encourage you to do you what you need to do to get the best out of 2020. This last year has had its challenges, with lots of ups and downs. We have seen many new people join us, while others have moved on, continuing to circulate among different congregations without ever being able to settle down or settle in.

We had an amazing time at Passover and our annual picnic was also amazing. Our journey through the Fall Feasts was spectacular and our journey through Chanukah is doing well. Our biggest challenge has been the moving scenario, where I contacted around 49 congregations. I spoke with some amazing pastors and visited some interesting facilities. Some people got back to me right away, some have not yet answered my emails or my voice messages.

I realize that this is a very busy time for churches, so I am not overly concerned. It continues to be our prayer and our firm resolution that we end up where we are supposed to be, even if some of us feel that the new location is not the best. The only person we want to keep happy is the L-rd as we walk in faithful obedience, cultivating the fruit of the Spirit while we weed out the works of the flesh.

We will always encounter resistance and we may be ambushed any number of times, but no one and nothing shall be able to separate us from the love and care of our beloved Messiah, as long as we cling to Him and respond to all of life's happenstances from His Word and by His Spirit.

Before I move on to some reflections for a new year, let me put one instance of resistance to bed so we can move on to better things. This is for those of you who are not on Facebook and have not read your emails. On Tuesday afternoon, as I was dropping Patti off at Kingsway Superstore, to do some shopping for her mom, I was assaulted. After Patti got out by the front door, I was carefully weaving my way through the endless pedestrian traffic and I noticed a big man walking in front of my van. He turned and moved diagonally, which brought him close to my van. If he had gotten too close, I would have stopped.

Suddenly he screamed that I nearly hit him and he bashed the back of my van. He then moved around to my door, ripped it open and punched me in the face. I wrestled the door out of his grasp and shut it. I wanted to lock it, but hit the window button and as it opened, he punched me in the face a second time. I put the window up and drove off, not wanting to escalate the violence. It happened in a matter of seconds, but my flesh had time to think of how much I wanted to hurt him, but two wrongs do not make a right.

It was Christmas eve, so I waited until Boxing Day to report it to the Police. They opened an

investigation and took my statement and will be examining the security tapes from the store. I also went to a clinic and got a thorough examination and while I still have some residual pain, I suffered no substantial damage – and my face did not even bruise.

It would have been worse if I had responded in my flesh and gave the man a beating because it was a crowded spot and others may have been hurt. The Police said I reacted well and said they are often called to that Superstore because they have no security at the front door. It was a bushwhacking attack by the enemy, but I came away from it unscathed.

This is how I want to react throughout 2020. I do not want to fight fire with fire, I want to stand on His Word and shine with all my might. If he had pulled me out of the car, I would have defended myself, but I thank the Messiah that I always wear my seat belt. From this point on, I will always lock my car doors when I am in the car. I feel sorry for the man who has been taken captive by the enemy to do his will. If they catch him, fine, if they do not, he cannot escape the grasp of the L-rd and I hope he finds the L-rd and is set free from a vicious temper that hurts his soul more than it hurts the people he attacks. Now back to my address.

We should do our best to make good, flexible plans for the coming year and as we pass through it, there will be many milestones as we see the hand of the L-rd bless us and protect us every step of the way. There may be painful and dangerous experiences lurking in ambush to try and wrestle us free from our faithful obedience to our Messiah through His Word. But as long as we learn to see things His way, according to His celestial agenda, there will be no bump and no ditch capable of slowing us down as we learn not to be detoured away from the Messiah and back into the world.

The rate of change in our society is still accelerating, but with all the new innovations and those extremely useless apps, nothing much really changes in our darkening world. In French we have a saying: “bientot ca change, bientot c'est la meme chose” (soon it changes, soon it is the same thing). In our same old, same old world, the enemy is still working overtime to crush believers and shrink the righteous core of light seekers until the darkness of the days of Noah returns.

Globalization is turning our world into a global village where germs travel around the world at the speed of light and pollution is attacking the quality of life even in the richest societies. Worldwide poverty is still rising and secularization is eroding all of our traditional spiritual values, both within our faith and within the faith of all traditional religions. Our belief in the supernatural G-d of the Bible is seen as a foolish legacy of ignorance which the world feels obliged to liberate us from. The world is radically modifying what is considered good and what is considered bad and more and more, we will have to fight for our lives and for our families as we are increasingly viewed as dangerous religious lunatics.

Our world may be spinning out of control, but we do not have to follow suit. I continually dialogue with people about both what I believe and why I believe it and I will never be bullied into silence by politically correct fascism of evolutionary nonsense. The radical increase of modern technological wonders is not a threat to our faith and we should never be afraid to use it, both to share our faith and to make our lives easier, as we walk on the old paths of faith and righteousness and let the L-rd give us increased wisdom and understanding so that we are not overwhelmed by our world's rapidly expanding knowledge base.

When I have trouble understanding what is going on in our darkening world, I dig deeper into

the Word and discover that while the pace of change is increasing, the secular agenda of the enemy of our souls remains identical. Using half truths and wild speculations, he is leading the world down the path to destruction, candy coating his poisonous lies until his victims are firmly under his spell. In the past I have called them spiritual zombies who are effectively spiritually dead on the inside and they want to bite us until we become like them. The only solution is to be firmly based in the Word and in prayer as we remain Sabbath powered and festival driven.

We are in the world, but we are never of the world and none of its seductive ideas or its sickening values should be allowed to take root in our hearts and lives. In 2020, we will walk with the King, just as we did in 2019 and we will rejoice, because we are one year closer to His return to set up His everlasting Kingdom over all the generations and nations of mankind.

Let me share some life verses with you, so our focus always remains what G-d is doing in our lives and in the world at large. Our warfare is spiritual, so we need to be equipped with the best spiritual weapons as we remain more than conquerors, as we pass through the storms and the doldrums which are waiting for us in 2020.

“For it is G-d who is working in you to give you the desire and the ability according to His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13) G-d is at work in each of us, even in the deepest valley or when we have to scale the highest mountain. He is building two categories of enrichment in our lives and He will be constantly renewing them day by day and year by year. First He gives us the desire, even when we fumble and blow it (2 Corinthians 7:11). Our inner man is being filled with motivation and a strong desire to discover G-d's will even in the darkest moments of our lives.

Next He gives us the ability to carry out His will, with all the wisdom and strength that we need. Let Him equip you to shine and be salty in 2020. Do you know what G-d is doing in your life? What desires and abilities are you being equipped with?

“For we are His workmanship, created for good works which He has prepared for us to fulfill” (Ephesians 2:10). We are saved and sanctified, not by any good works we may perform, but by His mercy and His grace. We are all individual spiritual works of art, driven by His grace to fulfill the good works which His Word outlines for us to perform. We are not trying to earn our way to the Kingdom, we are merely letting the power of the Kingdom in us find new and creative ways of expressing His love and His Word to our lost and dying, darkening world.

“ But set straight paths for your feet, so that which is wounded may be made stronger and not weaker” (Hebrews 12:13). Many of us have been wounded by experiences in our lives and have to limp through life until we are healed and set free. We should not just sit down and pout and say we are not going anywhere until G-d heals us and sets us free. We are not responsible for the damage we incur, we are only responsible for how we relate to this damage. It is our job and our privilege to set straight paths for our wounded feet, so that how we walk does not incur more damage. I call it redemptive limping as we make allowances for the damage we have incurred and refuse to abandon the straight an narrow, just because we are hurting and don't always get things our own way. May you be made stronger in 2020 and may your redemptive limping be blessed and bring you much healing.

“ Thus says YHVH, stand in the cross roads and ask for the old paths, where the good way lies and walk in it and find rest for your souls. But you said we will not walk in it” (Jeremiah 6:16). This verse does not speak out against change, it speak out for those eternal

principles of G-d's Word which will never change – but which will change us! There is really nothing new under the sun and the universe is functioning in the same way it has always functioned. Foolish and evil people are just coming up with new ways to commit old sins and we should never follow suit.

Jeremiah speaks about a sad reality that is chronic among too many believers. We refuse to seek for the old paths and get grumpy and carnal with those who challenge us to abandon the works of the flesh and cultivate the fruit of the spirit. It sometimes goes like this: "how dare they talk to me like that, I am ten times the believer that they are. They just do not understand why I have to bend the rules in my life." We listen to gossip and practice character assassination and come up with so many excuses not to study, not to pray, not to attend service, not to tithe and not to share our faith with our friends and neighbours.

Anger, bitterness, greed and speaking evil are the bad habits which are preventing too many believers from growing in the L-rd. Some are so critical of others while others undermine any attempts to hold them accountable to the Bible. Israel went into captivity because of their carnal stubbornness. May none of us follow suit in 2020. May none of us fall into functional idolatry as we allow the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life to mess with our spirituality and choke any growth out of our hearts and lives.

In 2020, may none of us fall into functional fornication as we allow forbidden sexual practices into our lives. In the L-rd, sexuality is only acceptable between one man and one women who have entered into the bonds of marriage. Sometimes, marriages fail and people seek for healing and peace in a second or third marriage. This is fine because we serve a G-d of healing and forgiveness and not of judgment and condemnation. We need to find healing and sexual fulfillment in a good, solid heterosexual marriage. Sleeping around outside of marriage is fornication and it has wrecked too many believers lives and has scarred too many children from broken homes.

May 2020 bring healing and great joy and may His blessings overwhelm all and any problems or obstacles you encounter along the way. May His work in your heart and life thrive as He opens doors for you to share the light and be salty. May you always be aware that you are a special piece of spiritual workmanship that none of the wounding and twisting of the world can ruin or destroy. Greater is He who is in you than the one who is in the world. In 2020, may you discover all the good works which YHVH has prepared for you to perform.

May you set straight paths for your wounded feet, so that you are healed and made stronger and not made worse or weakened. May 2020 be a year of joyful spiritual limping as you find your healing in Him and as you find that you are made stronger through your weaknesses because of the grace and power that is at work in your heart and life.

May you seek for the ancient paths and find great peace and healing in 2020 as you encounter freedom and release in the L-rd through His Word. Have a blessed new year in 2020. Shabbat shalom and shavua tov.