

Terumah	Offerings	The Heavenly Reality	L-rd's Table
Torah:		Exodus 25:1-27:19	
Haftarah:		I Kings 5:12 (26) – 6:13	
Brit Chadashah:		2 Corinthians 9:1-15	
Reading:	Richard p. 175 & Ps. 26.	Jewish Hero: Ishmael.	Carrier: Andrea

I have entitled this Torah Meditation: Heavenly Reality, because Moses was given a glimpse of heavenly realities that he had to represent symbolically. The Ark, the tabernacle and all the special furnishings had to come from gifts which the people gave with a good heart. They had all received gold and silver and fine linen from their Egyptian neighbours and to my way of thinking, it was poetic justice that the riches which would ordinarily be offered to pagan gods, were now being fashioned into a dwelling place for the presence of the one and only true G-d.

Moses was to use precious earthly materials to represent the heavenly realities which G-d was showing to him on the mountain. It says the ark and the rest of the materials had to be fashioned according to the model which Moses was being shown. He was either being shown the actual heavenly realities or significant symbols which he had to instruct the people on how to make exact replicas of what he had seen and experienced. It took a long time because G-d is never in a hurry when He teaches us and does not want us to do shoddy work in His name.

The people were being told to build a sanctuary for the Holy Presence, so that G-d could dwell apart from the people in their midst. They were to create a ritual distance between the Presence and the people, so that His dwelling in their midst would not become lethal. Gold features prominently among the construction materials because it never tarnishes.

The most significant feature of the Ark of the Covenant was to be the atonement lid (kapparot), which we call the mercy seat in English. The Presence would reside between the wings of the two seraphim (special angels) and it was to be a meeting place from where G-d would give His orders to the people through Moses.

Throughout the forty days and forty nights Moses spent on the mountain, in the cloud, he was being shown a series of models which he had to pass on to the people in the appropriate symbolic proportions.

Once the tabernacle and the tent were put together, they would form an "echad" or composite singularity (plural singularity). Echad is used to describe three realities for the people. First it is used to describe G-d who is One, even though He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Next it is used to describe the unity between a man and his spouse – where the two become one (echad). Lastly, it is used to describe how the various individual parts which were to make up the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting were to form an "echad" in a kind of symbolic oneness which was to reflect the reality of G-d's Oneness.

Moses was to ensure that there was a strict adherence to the symbolic proportions so that the heavenly reality behind the models adequately represented these realities with the appropriate symbolism.

The ark, the tabernacle and the tent were designed with three objectives in mind. First, they

had to be beautiful, because G-d is beautiful beyond description. They had to show that G-d is holy and totally separate from the sin and darkness which infests our world. Lastly, they were to represent the majestic monotheism of the Creator who is one of a kind and there is none like Him. He is not the best among many gods, He alone is G-d and there is none else.

There is some needless confusion around the identity of the skins which were to be used as a rain cover for the Tabernacle. Various translations say it was made from badger skins, others say it was made from porpoise skins, or even seal skins. This would be impossible because all of those animals are considered unclean. The word in Hebrew is "tachash" and it is a generic word for an antelope. Not to be outdone by all the weird speculation, the Talmud asserts that the covering was made from an antelope with a rainbow coloured hide that became extinct because so many of them were killed to make the covering.

It was the only part of the tabernacle and tent that was not colourful because its function was to serve as a rain cover. It was not made from an antelope with a rainbow coloured hide. It was made from ordinary antelopes because they are a clean animal.

There was to be two divisions in the tabernacle, separated by a thick veil so each part was invisible to the other. There was to be the holy place with the golden menorah, the incense altar and the table for the special bread, like the challah we use in our services. There were two altars associated with the tabernacle. There was the incense altar in the Holy Place and the big copper altar in front of the tabernacle, where the blood sacrifices were to be offered.

The entire construction was made in such a way as to leave no room for any kind of polytheism (a belief in more than one god) or pantheism (where everything is considered a part of god). As well, even though G-d could be accessed through sacrifices and rituals, His total otherness was never breached. It was to be a totally beautiful piece of folk art which was to act as the central focus for the newly redeemed people of G-d.

In our community, our hearts and bodies are the temple of G-d's Spirit and our lives need to be separate from sin and adorned with the beauty of holiness. There are many heavenly realities which are relayed to us symbolically, but we know that behind all the biblical symbolism there is an eternal reality which will one day burst forth upon all the nations and generations of mankind. We need to live every day for that eventuality.

At various times, artists and poets have tried to describe the immeasurable beauty of who G-d is, but, in fact there were only two descriptions which have come close to representing the beauty and wonder of who our G-d really is. There was first the tabernacle and the tent with all the beautiful furniture and fixtures. There was next the temple of Solomon which took the patterns of the tabernacle and amplified them so that the people could understand a little of the majestic glory of the King they were called to serve and whose Word they were called to obey. There is a final beauty which will be ours to see, once His Kingdom finally comes.

Whether we have to wait for the Kingdom to fully behold the splendor of our G-d, or whether He reveals a portion of it to us in dreams and visions, we need to always remember we are heaven bound pilgrims for whom nothing in this fading world should ever get our spiritual attention and allegiance. The heavenly reality is the only one worth living for.

Sermon: **The Scarlet Thread. Our last service at St. Timothy's Anglican church**

**Passage:"We know that all things work together for good for those who love G-d, who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If G-d is for us, who is against us?** (Romans 8:28-31)

Romans 8 is a very interesting chapter in the New Testament. Along with our passage for today, there are three more significant discussions in this wonderful chapter. 8:18-25 deals with the valley of sighs. In 8:26, 27 we learn how the Spirit expresses the inexpressible and the content of 8:32-39 could be called goose bump alley!

I selected our passage because our congregation has seen enough ups and downs to be turned into a roller coaster in a theme park. However, through it all, there has always been a scarlet thread to keep us front and center in the purposes of G-d and this thread should be our focus. Truly, despite all that we have gone through as individuals and as a community, all things indeed do work together for good because we love G-d and are called according to His purpose.

We are about to be greatly disrupted as we move and settle in to our new location, but it will be a disruption in a good way. St. Timothy's feels that they can no longer accommodate us and after searching over fifty potential locations, I believe that we have found the place where G-d wants us be as we settle in and take root once more. We were comfortable at St. Timothy's and very soon, we will be comfortable at Jasper Place Baptist.

But what does it mean to be called according to His purpose? Some believers believe very strongly in predestination and say that there is a smallish number of people who are actually called to become believers and who alone will inherit everlasting life. They take this passage and twist it away from its original intent. Being called according to His purpose is actually a fourfold process that begins with our Father's foreknowledge of all the nations and generations of mankind. His foreknowledge proceeds creation and extends beyond time.

In fact we were all created with the ability to chose to walk in the light and that is what predestination means. We have the Torah written on our hearts and we bear the very image of G-d in the deepest part of our beings. We were all born to chose and once that choice is activated, it is really the call of His Spirit wanting to lead us out of darkness and into His amazing, cleansing light. This is what being called means. It is a call which all of us receive.

Once we respond and place our faith in the Messiah, we are justified and all of our sin is washed away and we are called to a life of faithful obedience. This is what justified means. One fine day, this old world will pass away with great heat and lots of noise and we shall receive our heavenly bodies. This is what being glorified means.

Now we could get into a deeper theological discussion about all of this, but as believers He predestined us for choosing, then He called us and justified us and one day we will be with Him in eternal glory. In the interim He will make all things work together for His good in us.

You see, before anything ever happens to us, be it ever so bad or ever so good, it has to have His permission and every detail and every event in our lives always comes with a faithful obedience option we are called to put into practice. In fact, our whole lives are a series of situations which come with choices so that we may stay on the bumpy straight and narrow and

not have our faith eaten by the birds of doubt, or withered by scorching of temptations or even worse choked the weeds that want to distract us with the pleasures, the cares and the riches of this fading, darkening world.

We may face any number of challenges, but we will never encounter any which have the ability to push us outside of the protection and the provision of the blessing of G-d, in whatever form this divine intervention takes. We could be struck with illness. We could be attacked and even falsely accused. We could even be physically assaulted and become handicapped. We could even be arrested and jailed because of our faith and even chased out of our homes and be turned into penniless refugees whom no one wants to help.

We could even be beaten and tortured and some of us may even be martyred because we refuse to abandon our faith. You see, we should never be afraid of what comes our way. We should only be afraid of not accepting the choices and reactions G-d wants us to put into practice and in such a state of rebellion, begin to wander away from His kingdom and His righteousness. It is the final reality which should be our daily focus.

In the whatevers which wander and blunder through our lives, both as individuals and as a community, we should never become so blinded that we lose sight of the scarlet thread which holds the various intrusions of life together by faith and which keeps eternity the daily focus of our lives. What is your life focused on? Where is your life headed?

We are entering into a new chapter in the life of our community and we should look forward to see how the provision and protection of G-d guides us and helps us settle into our new location. It will mean encountering a learning curve and getting used to how things are done in our new facility. It will also mean building a new consort zone as we welcome the new people who will come to visit us in our new location. It will be business as usual for us.

Who we are as believers and as a community will not be fundamentally different than who we have been during our time at St. Timothy's. We will remain Sabbath powered and festival driven, as we draw closer and closer to the Messiah's return. We will still support our local Jewish community and still pray for both our local Messianic communities in Alberta and for those which are springing up around the world and especially in Israel.

We will still have to deal with any amount of spiritual opposition that wants to turn us against each other and bite and devour each other until we are consumed by each other. I am not happy with the amount of sickness our people have seen as the long Canadian winter gradually gives way to our brief spring and summer. I am also not happy with all the accidents and injuries we have encountered through no fault of our own.

We have angered the enemy of our souls and he will do his best to distract us away from the Word and cause our hearts and lives to be choked with the works of the flesh, to the point that we have no room left for the fruit of the Spirit. We will still encounter those who misunderstand us and who are even prejudiced against us because we live a Jewish lifestyle and follow the Hebrew calendar in a world where antisemitism is on the rise again.

But, if G-d is for us, I pity the person who stands against us. Just before the Second World War, when Nazi Germany began to attack, arrest and even kill her Jewish citizens, Corrie Ten Boom's father said he felt great pity for the German people because the were attacking the apple of G-d's eyes. Jewish people are no strangers to persecution and pogroms, but the blessing of G-d

has always followed us as we have watched our enemies fizzle out and disappear from the stage of human history. We are still here and G-d still blesses us.

We have outlived the ancient Egyptians, the mighty Assyrians and their Babylonian cousins. We saw the great Persian Empire rise and fall and not even the Greeks succeeded in destroying us. There is probably no people who did us more harm than the ancient Romans, whose slaughter of Jews surpassed the tens of millions. We also survived medieval slaughters and the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. Sadly, many people have hated us.

The greatest foe of modern times were the Nazis who nearly succeeded in wiping out most of the Jews in occupied Europe. Muslim antisemitism has the same objective, but it will not succeed any more than any of the other enemies who rose up against us. The blessing of almighty G-d will always be mightier than the attacks of the enemy, the world and the flesh.

I wish us great success in our new location, as we see interested people come out of the wood work and join our amazing, superlative Messianic Jewish congregation. We may still see lots of well meaning and confused people wander through our ministry and we will do our best to help them to finally find their feet in the Messiah and in His Word. But many believers live lives as spiritual gypsies, forever wandering, without ever being able to settle down. The same issues they refuse to resolve, will eventually crop up wherever they wander and prevent them from sending down roots into a dynamic community like the one we belong to.

All of us bear the image of our Father and have His Torah written on our conscience. We are predestined for a life of choices, which will either draw us closer to Him or make us wander even farther away than Cain did. His Spirit stands at the entrance all the noisy places of this darkening world and calls out to us to abandon darkness and move into His light. When we respond to His calling and come into the light, He justifies us and fits us for His service, as long as we keep making choices according to His Word. How are your choices doing?

Many of my friends came to faith with me, some 48 years ago and I have seen many people come to faith in the 48 years I have walked with the Lord. But, sadly, I have seen too many people fall by the wayside for any number of strange reasons. No one thought I would last because I was pretty wild and broken when I finally accepted the Lord. People said it would take years for me to get my feet firmly on the ground, but they forgot one thing. G-d knew me. G-d called me and G-d cleansed me, bit by bit, step by step, line by line because I have always determined to respond to life and to the wounds I keep on getting, from the stance of faithful obedience AND our Father has never let me done, not even once.

Many people have let me down and it is probably not over yet, but He will never let us down and it should be our prime objective to learn not to let Him down. Some people have very strange ideas when they come to the Lord and they even learn to sound spiritual when they are just stumbling around and not learning to walk with the King. Living in the Lord, according to His Word and guided by His Spirit, is the only life worth living and this is the lifestyle we are promoting at B'nai Chayim and this will never change. It is the life we have always promoted during our time at St. Timothy's and it will be promoted in our new location at Jasper Place.

Our last act in our last service as we bid farewell to St. Timothy's is observing the Lord's Table. There are many strange and wonderful ideas about what happens when you take the matza and drink the cup and I do not want to get into any of these weird understandings. The Lord's Table is a regular transaction between believers and the Messiah where the things of this feeble

world are pushed aside so that we can contemplate the wonder of the world to come.

It is also a time when we remember the price which was paid for us by our Saviour. It is a time when we understand that it was His wounding and His brokenness which makes us whole. It is also a time when we anticipate the coming marriage supper of the Lamb which will be the biggest and best Passover Seder this world has ever seen. We are reminded that this old world is fading and is passing away, even if it is taking its own sweet time before it is finally over. We need to live for the world to come and the L-rd's Table shows us the way.

The L-rd's Table reminds us that we are citizens of the world to come and whenever we become weighted down with the cares, the pleasures and the riches of this world, we can be cleansed, we can be renewed as we practice a mini Yom Kippur and are cleansed from our sins once again. We are not just cleansed from our sins, we are also cleansed from the stain of our sins. It is also a mini judgment day where we can be washed of our sins permanently and never have the condemnation or the dirt return. They are done away with forever.

His body was broken for our salvation. His blood was shed to give us life everlasting and every time we observe the L-rd's Table, we announce His death and resurrection to the crazy, hostile world we are only passing through and to which we will never really belong.

It is not a morbid celebration, but it is a sobering time where we allow our eyes to break free from the glares and stares of the world and freely contemplate the wonder of the world to come. Sin is a real problem that we have to deal with by learning to trust in the L-rd and obey the teachings of His wonderful Word. One day sin will be over, but regularly, as we pass through this life, we need to be cleansed and set free from the sin which so easily besets us.

So let us take stock, both as individuals and as a community and confess our sins so that we may be forgiven and be empowered to break what ever hold sin and this world will vainly try to bind us down with. I am not afraid of what is coming next, I just want to be sure that I keep short accounts with the Messiah and learn the power of repentance that has the ability to set us free from the deceptions of the flesh, the world and the enemy.

It is truly a feast of forgiveness which can renew us and help us to heal and grow as we remember who He is and who He wants us to be. How much of our hearts and lives belong to Him will determine the success and lingering spiritual impact we can have on our world, both as believers and as a believing community. How is your impact doing?

May the shed blood of the Lamb of G-d renew us to the depths of our being and grant us the power and the resolve to soldier on, filled with His Word and guided by His Spirit. He has been good to us over the years. He is good to us today and He will continue to be good to us as long as we walk with him according to His Word and never lose sight of the scarlet thread which links of hearts and lives to Him, no matter which valleys we have to walk through and no matter which high mountains we have to scale. He remains beautiful beyond description and the L-rd's Table is one of the best reminders of how much He loves us and how many good things He has in store for us. Let us partake together for the last time in this building.