



# B'NAI CHAYIM

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## CHILDREN OF LIFE

8 Tishri 5781 (26/09/20) **Shabbat Shuvah: Getting Back to Where You Belong** J. M. Terrett

## Ha'Azinu Give Ear A Summation Song

**Torah:** Deuteronomy 32:1-52

**Haftarah:** Hosea 14:2(1)-10 (9); Micah 7:18-29; Joel 2:15-27

**Brit Chadashah:** Romans 10:17-11:12 12:19; 15:9,10

Today's Torah Portion is a song which Moses composed to summarize both the amazing potential the House of Israel had when they walked with G-d according to His Word and the sinister potential for functional annihilation, when they strayed away from giving G-d their entire devotion, according to His Word. The rabbis identify 10 portions of Scripture as songs which are so powerful that as you read them, you are spiritually transported to the time and place when they were first sung.

Each time I read a portion of G-d's Word, I want my heart/soul/spirit to be as impacted as the people were when they first heard these powerful words. His Word is living and active and I want it to always reach into the deepest part of me, so that what is going on in my life, is what G-d wants to be going on. We all may have to wrestle with complex and contradictory motivations that want to pull us in more than one direction, but as long as we make His Word the foundation of whatever decisions we make and whatever actions we take, we will do fine.

We may have many valleys to maneuver through and many grueling mountains to climb and our heart may break multiple times, but when we walk with the Messiah according to His Word, the peace which passes understanding will always be our dwelling place. In Him, we will never be moved off the rock, nor withered by temptation or choked by the weeds of this present age. He will help us peacefully pass through all the howling storms of doubt and fear our enemy and the world will throw at us.

By this point in his ministry, Moses knew the people very well and he had no illusions about what they were capable of. This song is to be a generational community reminder that you can fool some of the people, some of the time, but never the G-d who will always have our best interests at heart, even when we don't.

He begins by invoking creation to listen to what he is about to sing, because each word comes from the Creator who wants to bring abundant life to all who listen to what He is about to have Moses sing. He is the almighty, flawless G-d, entirely faithful and upright. He cannot and will not let the people blame Him for their rebelliousness, even though He is their Master and their

Father.

He is the one who scattered the nations and determined the limits of where they should live. He is also the One who took Israel as His portion and made Jacob His special people. Over the years He has taken excellent care of the people, even as He brought them out of a desolate wasteland. He hovered over Israel like an eagle and even carried the people on His feathers. There was no strange god with YHVH when He did all of this and He will still bring great abundance to His people.

But when they were full of food and fat, they abandoned the Rock of their salvation to worship abominable, strange gods who had just shown up. Because they have stirred up YHVH's wrath and jealousy He will stir up their jealousy through fools who are not a people.

He will rage against them even more completely than He blessed them. They will know fevers, hunger and perish by the sword, with no exceptions. But just as YHVH was erasing their memory from mankind, He will hold off and not let those who were destroying His people say that it was them and not YHVH who was annihilating the House of Jacob.

If only His people would see that all of this disaster came because they abandoned their Rock to go after the abominable fake gods who are incapable of helping them in their times of distress. YHVH alone is G-d and there are no other gods. All the rest are powerless fakes. He is all powerful and lives forever and takes direct vengeance against His adversaries. His arrows will become drunk with their blood until they are utterly destroyed.

YHVH calls the nations to sing the praises of His people, for G-d takes vengeance on those who have shed the blood of His servants. He goes on to make atonement for His land and for His people. He will clean everything up as if it never happened, when His people come back to Him. He does not hold grudges when His people abandon their folly and return to Him and to His Word.

Moses pronounced all of these words before the people, with Joshua beside him, preparing to become their new leader. Immediately after he finishes the song, he commands the people to heed all the words that he has spoken and to teach their children to do likewise. There is no room in YHVH for part time or partial obedience, it has to all or nothing.

It is not a casual requirement they are called to, it is their life, so that they may prolong their lives in the land which they will take possession of, after they have crossed the Jordan. Before Moses gives his final blessing over the tribes of Israel, he is allowed to climb up Mount Nebo in the hills of Moab and gaze upon the land of Canaan. He is reminded that it was his disobedience in hitting the rock that disqualified him from taking the people into the land. This mountain was also to become the place of his burial, just as Aaron's place of burial was Mount Hor.

He was a good leader who guided the people even though they were often stubborn and rebellious. He had great patience and never let the people forget who they were and what their calling was. They were often very critical of him, but learned to respect and even love him. He saved them from annihilation a few times and never surrendered to their stubbornness. He wasn't tired of being their leader and had an intimate relationship with G-d that no other prophet would ever have until G-d Himself walked among us when the Messiah came as the Word Incarnate.

As we observe Shabbat Shuvah, we need to understand our potential to follow either the good or the bad example of Israel. G-d will always be compassionate, even when His righteousness requires that He discipline us for however long it takes for us to come to our spiritual senses. His Word remains our singular calling because it is our life as we walk as pilgrims through this world towards the world to come. It doesn't matter what it is we may have to face in the coming year, as we come to the end of the Torah and get ready to start at the beginning again. The only thing which matters is if your life is a storehouse for the spiritual treasures of His Word.

Which parts of this summation song do you want to be reflected in your life? G-d is not going anywhere, are you going anywhere in Him through His Word?

### **Sermon: Shabbat Shuvah: Getting Back to Where You Belong**

Right after the first two sons of Adam and Eve each made a sacrifice to G-d, Cain was both disappointed and angry that his vegetable sacrifice was unacceptable to G-d. He could have traded with his shepherd brother and offered a lamb to G-d, but likely sibling rivalry got in the way. As he was dealing with this correctable failure, G-d spoke to him and said that when he did that which was not right, sin crouched at the door of his heart. In dealing with the failure, his first calling was to dominate over this sinfulness and not let it dominate over him (Gen. 4:6, 7). Failure and making mistakes is not the same thing as being sinful, unless we sin as we are trying to fix the problem.

Today is Shabbat Shuvah and we want to learn to fix problems and even brokenness by returning to G-d through His Word, so that we make things better and not worse. As I was getting this meditation ready, three themes came to mind and I want to use them as the themes of what I share with you.

Sometimes we stray from the L-rd when our lives get complicated and we need to **rewire** our hearts/souls/spirits and not let the darkness of this world become the source of our reactions. And sometimes when we incur spiritual damage, we need to **repair** the damage and not let it get worse. Also, sometimes we may even let sinfulness into our lives and we need to **remove** its influence from our lives. Shabbat Shuvah is all about: rewire, repair and remove so that we do not follow the negative example of Cain. It is always better to die in YHVH's service than to delve into the sinfulness which is engulfing our modern world.

Even in our world where the pace of change is accelerating at an alarming rate, in every new situation we encounter, we need to always apply the same unchanging principles of G-d's Word. We always need to upgrade our lives by applying the eternal, changeless Word of G-d. Our constant, daily challenge is to stay focused and centered on this Word even as we see the moral and spiritual fabric of our world unraveling. We may be making amazing technical progress, but our world is being spiritually shredded and we should never follow suit.

You see, the dark side of the Age of Enlightenment is that both biblical authority and biblical morality were challenged and even overthrown. I agree with correcting the abuses of medieval society, where the interests of a tiny elite kept the masses in ignorance and poverty. I also applaud the rise of social justice, because those who oppressed and mistreated the masses did not have a mandate from G-d to rule by royal whim and treat people like so many farm animals who only existed to serve their oppressors.

Universal education was also a blessing, along with medical discoveries and agricultural innovations. Along with this needed progress, the dark side was the rise in sexual immorality and the replacement of traditional spirituality with the myth of evolutionism. It is fast becoming the new global religion among people on the political left and among people on the political right. Bible based faith and morality is increasingly challenged and even marginalized and vilified. Spiritually conservative beliefs and values are seen as bigoted and repressive, used by bad people as a cover for all kinds of abuse which allegedly damage people and turn them into brainwashed victims. They falsely claim that religious people need to be rescued from the chains of their biblical delusions and set free from their repressive morality. Things are sinking fast, but on Shabbat Shuvah we need to make sure that we are not going down the drain with our darkening society.

All kinds of sinfulness is now considered respectable and is even protected by new laws and our children are being brainwashed against our biblical faith and spiritual values. However, we can still choose to hold fast to our faith and prevent our soul/spirit/heart from suffering any permanent damage. When I was so sick with my perfume sensitivity, it was a form of brain damage where over exposure in one stinky school caused my brain's limbic system to get stuck on red alert as I got sicker and sicker. Our society wants to permanently damage our spirituality and pull us away from a Bible based lifestyle.

Even with the mounting pressure of secular evolutionism, it is still possible to keep sin on the outside and to fix all and any breeches that society has made to our spiritual immune system. It is also still possible to heal all the wounds we have experienced from the constant hostile pressure of the enemy, the world and the flesh. We can do all of this without resorting some of the spiritual extremism where naive and paranoid people confuse misguided spiritual intensity with the balanced, authentic biblically based spirituality we are called to embrace.

Truth should be measured by how passionately someone believes something. On Shabbat Shuvah we are also called to reaffirm our biblical objectivity and examine both what we believe and how we live. Our fading society may be heating up and moving ever more quickly into spiritual folly, but we must never follow suit. Rage and false accusations and the use of violent rhetoric are really just Trojan horses that the enemy is trying to use in our midst to try and overthrow both our spiritual credibility and our testimony,

I am growing alarmed by some of the strange posts many so called believers are repeatedly posting on social media and the delete button is becoming my favorite response. There is no talking to some people and anything you try and say is already discredited because you have supposedly been deceived.

Shabbat Shuvah reminds us that we need to be in charge of our spirituality and keep it free of both the encroaching folly of our secular society and the shouts and screams of those who are convinced that the sky is falling. They have their minds made up and do not want to be confused with the facts – which they are convinced are fake anyway.

Shabbat Shuvah allows us to see that our repentance can be a chain breaker which can sever all the inroads any kind of darkness is trying to make into our lives. Paul warned us that if we

bite and devour each other, we may get consumed by one another and by the arbitrary false legalism which many try to impose on the Law of G-d. We are set free by the Law as we learn to avoid all the pitfalls of false legalism which invents an endless stream of traditions and customs which the Bible does not teach.

We are under attack from the world on the outside and from many forms of spiritual extremism on the inside. Shabbat Shuvah is a time to celebrate our spiritual freedom, where all the fetters of sinfulness can be broken by the power of repentance. We can be set free to reaffirm that faith in G-d and obedience to His Word are the key to both spiritual freedom and spiritual abundance.

Too many believers wallow in anger and bitterness and do not realize that just sounding spiritual is no cure for acting carnally. Perpetually finding fault and riding along on our pet peeves, prevents us from walking peacefully with the L-RD in how we actually live.

Grumpy believers need to be set free, just as much as those who are losing their grip on the truths of the Bible. We need to learn what it means to crucify the flesh, before it crucifies us. Shabbat Shuvah can be a time where we have a heart to heart with our heart and make sure that in every part of our lives we are programmed for peace and joy and love on our pilgrimage through this life.

We need to learn to stop listening to the world and dive into His Word. We also need to learn to listen what we talk about and to the stories we tell, so that we can adopt the heart themes of G-d's Word. We do not want to get stuck like a broken record going around and around, getting nowhere spiritually.

We need to reprogram how we respond to the world and to each other and set straight paths for our wounded feet so we get better and not worse. The tide of spiritual deception is constantly on the rise and we need to stand firm on His Word and repair any damage we encounter along the way.

We need to understand that we are sinners by choice and not by nature and that infighting and constant arguing among our selves can do as much damage as the folly of the enemy, the world and our flesh. What is in our heart/soul/spirit is just as real to YHVH as what is going on in our lives. Sound doctrine and nurturing the fruit of the Spirit is our singular calling in our fading world. Learning to resolve our differences peacefully is also part of this calling.

We also need to be careful not to become spiritually entitled where we think that our spiritual standing before G-d that it does not matter what we think or how we live our lives. Teshuvah (repentance) is our lifeline to G-d as we strengthen our grip on His Word and seek to remain filled with His Spirit. We need to be salty light, gently and firmly shining as beacons of G-d's kingdom to the lost and dying of our world.

I know I have gone over a considerable amount of material, in a short amount of time. Take the notes, examine the concepts, talk to your rabbi because we are all in the same boat and on the same journey. It will not always be very easy, but it will always be very satisfying. Hold firmly to your biblical faith and walk in obedience to the teachings of our resurrected Messiah.

Shabbat shalom.

See you on Yom Kippur, which begins on Sunday night at 7 pm and continues on Monday at 10 am, 2 pm and ends after the 7 pm service on Monday night.

This is a very special time of the year because we serve a very special G-d who sent His very special Messiah and we want to make our lives all about Him and His Word.