

6 Av, 5774 (2/7/14) **Black Sabbath: When the Temples Burned** J. M. Terrett

Devarim **Words** **One More Time With Feeling**

Torah: Deut. 1:1-3:22

(1) 1:3 The first day of the 11th month of the 40th year. Two months later, they celebrated their first Passover in the land and the manna ceased. This book was a dissertation/repetition where Moses is teaching the new generation why they came to be where they were – instead of having gone into the land in the second year after the exodus. It is a warning and the closest thing in the Bible to a systematic theology (explaining things rather than just teaching them)

(2) 1:16, 17. Listen, judge according to righteousness, no favouritism of the great over the small or the Jew over the Gentile, for it is G-d who renders justice. This still should apply to us today.

(3) 1:22 the idea of the spies was from the people – it was really a reasonable sounding cop out, one of the worst yes, but passages in the Bible.

(4) 2:23. The arrival of the Philistines is mentioned, but nowhere is there a problem mentioned which could resist the power of G-d which works through those who have faith and are obedient. The whole book is both an encouragement and a warning to each new generation of believers, Jew and Gentile, that the purposes of G-d are unstoppable, never us.

Haftarah: Is. 1:1-27

(5) 1:9 If we had not been left with a feeble remnant, we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah – still applies today.

(6) 1:16-19 our charter of rights and obligations which has not changed. Verse 27 is an apt conclusion and mentions Jews and Gentiles.

Brit Chadashah: Acts 7:51-8:

(7) 7:60. Yeshua was offered up for the sins of the world according to the purposes of G-d and His death cannot be blamed on any subsequent generation of Jews. The death and destruction which occurred during the war which ended in the final destruction of the second temple staggers the imagination and one talmudic commentator said it happened because of a hatred of the Gentiles by that generation. This is not the primary cause – the people rose up against the one whom they had declared their sovereign overlord without the sanction of the L-rd. The first generation out of Egypt was lost through disobedience, may none of us or our generations follow suit. One more time with feeling, let us renew our commitment to walk in His ways and cling to His promises.

(John p. 135) **Ps. 137** **Jewish Hero: Hadar Goldin**
Black Sabbath

I react strongly to those secular historians who assign Israel's brief period of glory under David and Solomon merely to a brief period between the rise and fall of world powers. For them it is as if the success and failure of the Jewish people depended on events which occur in the world around us and not on the blessing or the discipline of G-d. From the very

beginning, our father Abraham was told that his descendents (and their converts) would be both a mighty nation and a blessing to all nations. Part of that blessing is our testimony of what happens when we walk with G-d and what happens when we walk away from G-d.

This is what we are remembering on Black Sabbath this morning.

This blessing and discipline is further complicated by the existence of two core groups within the people of Israel – the righteous core and the sinful core. Neither group has ever succeeded in eradicating the other, but the destiny of Israel as a nation has always depended on which group was in charge of the nation. This is not an oversimplification, but a clear statement to believers that our destiny as people and as nations depends on our walk with the King of creation and not upon the interplay of geopolitical socio-economic factors in the world around us or on events and the circumstances of our lives.

The rise and fall of empires and the rise and fall of economic systems is an interesting study because it would seem that at critical moments in human history the course of human history has rarely, if ever, been determined by military or technical superiority, as much as it has always been the product of a consistent randomness where factors beyond the control of human effort have been the determining factors in how events have turned out.

G-d's hand has always been the deciding factor to limit the impact of unrighteousness and to promote the practice of righteousness, both within and beyond the community of faith. This is because He has people in every nation and generation of mankind around the globe who seek Him and whose lives reflect a hunger for truth and justice and honesty and mercy. So even at the blackest moments in the history of our race – and there have been so many – the race is not always to the swift, nor victory to the valiant, nor even bread to the wise or riches to the intelligent or favour to the skilful, because it all seems to depend on timing and circumstances (which is what Ecclesiastes 9:11 says).

It would seem when we do our best or when we do our worst there is another level of intervention which holds the trump card, both to limit the impact of our success and of our failure. Today, as we observe Black Sabbath – not the rock band, but the date – we need to understand that we do not live in a random world where both virtue and corruption are ultimately irrelevant in determining how things turn out under the inescapable influence of the mega and meta issues of geopolitical, socio-economic factors where the survival of the fittest and the smartest are part of the evolutionary destiny of mankind.

Poppycock. Genghis Khan barely escaped assassination as a young person, Alexander was nearly crushed by Darius, Napoleon was defeated by allied propaganda and Hitler and the Japanese made critical, wrong last minutes decisions which defeated them, not the combined might of the allies.

We do not live in a random physical universe, but one which is guided by the interplay of laws whose application is determined by which of these laws come into play – from earthquakes to super novas at the edge of our galaxy.

The same is true in our human universe. Our destiny and that of Israel and also that of the nations may be influenced by the interplay of various geopolitical and socio-economic factors, but it is the hand of the L-rd which governs over and above both human folly and human ingenuity. Lets look at some scriptures together:

On the shores of the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and we wept when we remembered Zion. We suspended our harps on the willows of that country. There our conquerors asked us for songs and our oppressors wanted joy. (they said) sing us some of the songs of Zion. How could we sing the songs of the L-RD in a foreign country? If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue attach to my palate, if I do not remember you and if I do not make of Jerusalem the principle subject of my joy! Yahveh, remember the children of Edom who said in the day of Jerusalem, burn it down, burn it down right to the foundations! Daughter of Babylon, who is about to be devastated (or the destroyer), blessed is the one who does the same evil to you which you did to us. Blessed is the one who seizes your children and crushes them against the rock. (Ps. 137)

Oh if my people would listen to me, if Israel would walk in my ways! In an instant I would confound their enemies and I would turn my hand against their adversaries (Ps. 81:14, 15 (13, 14)

Say to them: I am alive! Says the L-rd, YHVH and that which I desire, is not that the wicked would die, but that he would change his conduct and that he would live. Return, return from your evil way; and why would you die, House of Israel?

First of all we need to understand that when our own world, our own lives crumble and are devastated, the purposes of G-d are not thwarted. The ultimate control of G-d may be beyond our ability to fathom, but it is this control which keeps us alive and which will bring all of His purposes to their fulfilment in the fullness of His timing, over and above the mere details of our lives and over and above the mere happenstances of the world we live in.

The great tragedy in the destruction of both temples has nothing to do with damaged real estate or even with the massive loss of life. The great tragedy is that neither catastrophe needed to happen. There is no human superpower or spiritual force capable of withstanding the power of G-d, when His people walk with Him.

There is also that which comforts me as we remember these horrible events generation by generation – we are still here (am Yisrael chai) to remember and we will be here until the L-rd returns. The plight of the Jewish people in the second dispersion (diaspora) is a sad tale of persecution and murder, but it is also an amazing story of survival. Our Messiah said that Jerusalem would be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is over.

We have seen Jerusalem become Jewish for the first time in nearly 2,000 years. In the midst of our mourning over the destruction of our two temples and our mourning over how the nations have mistreated and abused our people, we can rejoice that His hand has never been removed from Israel and He is still in charge of the raging heathen and will never allow darkness to cover the earth for a second time until His purposes are fulfilled.

What can we learn from all of this. We can learn that mourning is right and proper. We can learn that the L-rd both blesses and disciplines His people. We can also learn to position ourselves so that we are not destroyed by the discipline of the L-rd, like so many who refused to repent.

G-d does not want to punish the world and He does not want to punish His people, Jew and Gentile, in the world, but He will remain faithful to His Word and all of us are individually and corporately expendable when we walk away from Him.

Black Sabbath should be a call to repentance where Jewish people and Gentile people avoid falling into the trap of spiritual entitlement – where we think that our special status gives us the right to violate His Word and yet still be protected by Him. If anything He requires more from His people, Jew and Gentile and one of the most effective testimonies to the world is how His hand guides, blesses and disciplines, generation by generation.

We will never encounter an enemy or an empire or a geopolitical socio-economic set of situations capable of doing us any real harm when we seek His face and walk in His ways. We are unstoppable when we walk according to His unstoppable purposes.

Join me in mourning for the needless destruction of two temples and join me in renewing my generational commitment to walking according to the irresistible purposes of G-d in our blessed Messiah. In the midst of the current crisis in Gaza, my heart goes out to the families of victims on both sides and you all know whom I hold responsible for violence (Hamas and the international cowards who enable them), but I know that when the heathen rage and rise up against Zion and call for the complete destruction of the people of G-d, Jew and Gentile, that this will never happen – and the real victims in this conflict are those who have turned their backs on the King and who fight against His kingdom.

Let them scream out their threats, let them launch their rockets and dig their tunnels and let them manipulate the media and use funerals as photo ops, they shall not prevail. Israel is home and Israel is coming home to her Messiah and that is all that really matters.

Yeshua is the light of the world, even as we slide through Black Sabbath on our way to Tisha B'Av and let us remember both that His final purposes are unstoppable and that we are called to make our lives revolve around that which really drives the universe – His will and His Word.