

22 Nisan, 5772 (14/04/12) *Pesach, The Eighth Day: The Bonds that Set Us Free* J.
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Passover, the Eighth Day

Happy Campers Camping in His Happiness

Torah:

Deut. 15:19-16:17; Num.28:19-25

- (1) 15:19 – we are His first born, all of our first born belong to Him (all of our new beginnings)
- (2) 16:6 – we are destined to camp with Him wherever His Name resides (permanent servants)
- (3) 16:15 – we are to learn to give ourselves up to His joy at every stage of our lives
- (4) 16:17 – we are to give back a portion of what He has given us – the same portion, not always the same amount

Haftarah:

Is. 10:32-12:6

- (5) 11:9 – one day all conflict and suffering will be over under the eternal reign of our Messiah
- (6) 12:2 – in the midst of the whatever's we wander through we can always count on deliverance, as we let Him be our confidence and our strength as we worship, because He is the L-rd of our journey and never the circumstances we encounter

Brit Chadashah:

Rev. 21:1-7; 22-26; 22:1-7

- (7) 21:6 – we will one day have access to the river of life (and the tree of life), as we learn to drink from His fountain and eat of His provision through this life

Psalm 2

Jewish Hero: Yizkor

Today is the last day of Passover, that is, the last day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Our regular cycle of Torah readings has been interrupted as we finish the story of our father's exodus from Egypt. Today we celebrate their arrival in safe territory and the real beginning of their journey to the Holy Mountain. Now, for the first time, they camp long enough to let their bread rise and to take stock of what they have been able to bring with them, as they get ready to do some serious camping and make the transition from slaves who have fled in haste, to travellers who have a destination that will begin to help them forget their slavery.

In a sense, when we accept the L-rd and come to faith, we also begin our journey and stop being slaves and spend the rest of our lives focused on our destination as we learn to be travellers who are learning to forget their slavery and who are doing some serious camping, as we pass through this life on our journey to our real home in Glory.

This does not mean that our lives have no meaning apart from our destination, but that our destination gives everything in our lives a new meaning, as we learn not to get too attached to the things of this life, or to any one stage in this life. We can still rejoice at success in this life and we can still cry at the sadness we encounter in this life – as we did while we remembered our beloved departed. We reach a point where we begin to evaluate everything and everyone in terms of the final destination and we know we are not stuck or limited by the things that are in our life, or by the things we wish were in our lives.

We become permanent campers who are only just passing through, as all the previous generations have done before us and we begin to see all and any objectives we set for our lives only as steps or stages in this greater journey – and as we learn to be skilled campers, we take regular stock of our gear to make sure we have what we need and do not get burdened by things we do not need.

I have two directions I want to go with this message today. I want to talk first about bonds that set us free and then about baggage that either enriches us or impoverishes us.

For the bonds, I want to use **Eph. 2:11-22** and for the baggage, I want to use I Cor. 3:10-15.

Let's read the first passage together, so that we know who we are bonded or linked with during our journey through this life. We are one new man, Jew and Gentile, built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, the Lord Yeshua Himself being the chief cornerstone.

Sometimes, all too frequently, I forget who I am and who I am linked to and bonded with – that is I forget where I am going and who has gone before me on the same journey (and who is now going with me on the same journey).

Let me briefly describe these bonds that set us free. In a real sense we are all bonded with our father Adam and our mother Eve – their blood has flowed in unbroken succession through all the generations and happenstances of human history to flow through my life and into the life of my children and grandchildren. It is flowing through me on its way home too and as I understand that my own blood has come down to me through so many other lives, I am no longer as scared or worried or impressed or envious of all that can happen to me in this life. It all begins to take shape as nothing more than another episode in a longer story and I can rest in that story.

Who would have thought that with all the alarms, murders, wars, famines and plagues, that the fragile blood of one man and one woman would fill the earth, not once, but twice and the enemy of our souls and the follies of this world and even the regular stupidity of the flesh has never succeeded in breaking that bond that we all have with father Adam and mother Eve.

It sets me free from worrying about what can happen to me or to us and allows me to see another bond that is mine and is ours. In a very real sense we are also bonded with all believers, Jew and Gentile, since our father Abraham left Haran and began his journey towards Canaan. Hebrews 11 gives a marvellous description of this "Heroes of the Faith", Hall of Fame and I want to get a little mystical on you. In a very real sense, we left with him, and we left with Jacob to go to Egypt and with Moses to flee out of Egypt.

All that has happened to our ancestors in the faith, has also happened to us, whether we are Jewish or Gentile (I Cor. 10:6) and just as they survived and thrived and overcame and rebuilt and also as they ran fast (and sometimes not fast enough), so our lives are bonded with them and we are part of the same journey, part of the same story. We are never lost, no matter where our lives are going – they went through doldrums, they all went through failure, old age, success and failure and our faith made it down to us and will survive us in the next generation, in the next chapter of this great story.

The third bond is with our fellow travellers, who are also on this same journey and who are also bonded with father Adam and mother Eve, and with all the previous generations of believers who have preceded them to. The other night, I was thinking about all the people whom I have known in my life and in my ministry and I am amazed at the number and the variety of them. As we continue to build and to strengthen our community we will establish bonds with the new ones who come into our midst and we will also, sadly, lose contact with those who wander off to travel in another part of this generational camp of believers we are all a part of, or who will join that scattered group of stragglers who never find their place in any travelling community, and who never know the joy and the danger of becoming part of a functioning community of believers.

We are bonded to our community and this bond we will set us free, because we never have to be alone in our journey and can pick up travelling tips and give travelling tips to the others who know that this life is nothing but a journey and who can help us when we temporality lose our way and want to settle down in this life, instead of keeping on travelling through.

There are other bonds (of friendship and marriage and parenthood and others), but if we understand that once we become believers that we never stand alone and unconnected we can grow in our true identity and not lose sight of who we really are and where we are really going. We are bonded we father Adam and mother Eve. We are bonded with all believers, Jew and Gentile who have also journeyed through this life towards our Father's home. We are also bonded with our community, with all other believers in this generation who are also on the same journey.

How are your bonds doing? Are you letting them set you free from the snares we will encounter along the way? As we come to the end of the Passover season for one more year, are your bonds strengthening or are they slipping a little? We are truly only carriers of Adam's blood. We are truly only fellow travellers with all other believers and we are truly only fellow travellers with all other believers of our generation.

This brings me to our second passage and to my conclusion. Let us read **I Cor. 3:10-15**. As travellers, how we travel is building us a home in glory – what kind of home are you building and what kind of materials are you building with? What kinds of baggage are carrying in your heart and in your life as we draw closer and closer to the end of our journey?

Imagine with me the motley camp of former slaves who had to grab what they could and run for their lives in the middle of the night. When they got out of Egyptian territory and they had time to take stock, how much of what they brought do you think they left in a pile after they moved on from their first camp? What kind of baggage did they abandon each time they moved camp?

Our lives are truly a series of camping sites and what we bring with us will either make this camping good, and efficient, or we will waste our time dragging useless stuff from campsite to campsite until it finally burns and we suffer the loss of something we should have jettisoned long before it was finally taken from us.

The passage talks about gold, silver and precious jewels, -the materials that went into the tabernacle, that symbol of the temple, which was a symbol of that Heavenly City we are all journeying towards and represents those eternal things that we need to take with us and pass on to the next generation as the only treasures which truly matter in this life.

Gold (the Word), Silver (spirituality), precious jewels (the fruit of the spirit). The wood hay and the stubble are things we may need to use along the way, but are only meant to be temporary tools on our journey and which will constantly be wearing out and passing away – things we should use but which we should never give our hearts and lives to.

The children of Israel may have had clothing that did not wear out in their journey, but where is it today?

The tents, the animals, the food – all of that was only useful for a time and was never worthy to become heart baggage, or generational baggage, for them or for us.

We are bonded to be set free – our bond with Adam’s blood sets us free from thinking that this life is all that we have, our bond with other believers sets us free from thinking that our troubles are ever too big for us, our bond with other travellers helps us to keep living like travellers and not get distracted by this life as if it really mattered.

Along the way, we have to be careful to be good campers and not clutter our lives and hearts with things that are not useful for our journey, but which we have to learn to jettison as they wear out and cease to be useful. Has your life become cluttered this last year? Are there things you need to jettison?

We have honoured the memory of those who have preceded us into death and we need to know that we shall one day join them, until the kingdom comes and all the generations and nations and people who have ever live stand before the King.

They were also bonded with Adam’s blood and with all believers and even with the communities of faith they belonged to (or didn’t belong to).

Their ability to affect their destiny is over – that part of their journey is over and all that they have accumulated in their hearts will survive their death, like a massive hope chest or a massive treasure chest, waiting for the day when its true contents can finally be revealed and when they see what is really important and how much of that content will survive.

What will be revealed will depend on what was stored there, but only that which is fire proof will have any final meaning.

How are your bonds doing?

How is your camping doing?

What are storing up for that great day?

How much of it will survive to be taken with you into glory?

Let’s pray.