

This Shabbat we celebrate two great events in the unfolding of the purposes of G-d: the coming **Exodus from Egypt** and the **coming redemption of the Messiah** in our midst. The first event was a *temporal deliverance* from physical bondage, where the true G-d of Israel demolished the oppression of the false gods of Egypt, the mightiest superpower of the day. The second event was the second part of the promise to Abraham, and speaks of the *cosmic deliverance* of all generations of all nations of mankind from the empire of sin.

One event does not overshadow the other, they *complement* each other perfectly. As Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we have a unique perspective which sees the whole picture. We see the unfolding of the double promise made to our father Abraham. The House of Jacob is about to become the great nation the L-rd promised to Abraham. Also all houses of mankind are about to be blessed in the seed of Abraham, our glorious Messiah.

In Messiah, Abraham becomes the *spiritual father* of all mankind and believers from all nations need to rejoice with Israel at her deliverance from the house of Egyptian bondage. I want to say something carefully here, which may be misunderstood, unless you listen carefully and only quote me in context. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and especially Moses were all Messianic Jews. How? They lived and died **believing** in the hope of Israel's great destiny to be both a *great nation* and a source of all *blessing to all nations*.

Today we celebrate the arrival of the first major step in the deliverance which would culminate with Messiah's sacrifice on the cross. This Shabbat's Haftarah portion speaks of Elijah heralding the arrival of Messiah. So, I want to speak to you today about our Messiah. He is the One who came once to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world, and who is coming back to bring human history to an end and to establish **G-d's eternal kingdom** on earth forever.

However, as we speak about our Messiah, we have to deal with **three issues**. The **first** issue relates to the return of the L-rd, which many fundamentalist Jews and Gentiles misrepresent and make all kinds of weird predictions about. They want to figure out the exact time when the Kingdom shall come and they interpret all sorts of world events as direct fulfillments of prophecy. When these events do not turn out to be fulfillments of prophecy, they do not admit their error and do not quit making false predictions.

They just look around for more events and try and use them to prove that they know the exact time when Messiah shall return to establish His kingdom on earth. They remind me of Chicken Little: the sky is falling; the sky is falling, only instead of hiding in a cave, their theology caves in, if you will pardon the pun. I call them *serial correlationists*, people who are addicted to guessing, and who would not recognize the arrival of the kingdom until it bites them on the butt. They sort of act like this: this verse means this, and this event is a fulfilment of this, no wait the other way around – nuts. Oh well, let's start all over again – we'll make it fit somehow.

The second and third issues are related and they concern the other side of the theological coin: Liberal Christians and Jews, and secular sceptics who are faith impaired, and belief challenged in two ways. **First of all**, they go to great lengths to try and prove that the words of Yeshua and of Moses were not really spoken by either Yeshua or Moses. They call this redactionism, which means that the original story was rewritten, with new details added and some original detail deleted. This was supposedly done to suit the purpose of later writers who wanted to change an earlier message and pass off their newer version as the original.

With the Torah, they imagine that four different authors really wrote the Torah, and with the Gospels that most of the sayings of Yeshua were really added later by the church. There is no

actual proof for this and as a matter of fact, archaeological evidence, in both cases, with the Torah and the Gospels, shows that both documents have come down to us virtually unchanged. Why do these people want to cast doubt on the words of Yeshua and of Moses? This brings me to **the other half** of their faith/belief problem.

These people do not believe in the supernatural, and believe that all religions are really just make believe stories to help people come to terms with a universe they do not really understand. They even have a fancy term for religious explanations about how the universe came into being: *pre-scientific cosmology*. In other words, before people knew about science, and could explain the universe in terms of natural laws and scientific principles, they made up stories that explained the universe with a very childish, make believe understanding of reality.

They place a belief in angels and miracles in the same category as a belief in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, or the tooth fairy. They describe religion as primitive people trying to explain what they do not understand, so that a confusing world makes more sense to them. They even teach that once people grow beyond the need to believe in the supernatural, they can put their faith in the laws of science. For them religion deals in ideas and pictures, which may be used to tell interesting and comforting stories, but has nothing to do with reality and truth.

Now that I have opened up this can of worms, which animals are not kosher anyway, let me relate this all back to Shabbat HaGadol. In Egypt, the great, wise, and sophisticated men of that era chose to believe that their gods and their view of the world were true. They mocked the beliefs of a bunch of foreign slaves and it took one whole year for their false view of the world and their false gods to crumble into the dust. All that remains of that great power and that religion, are a few ruins and some mummies. Those annoying former slaves are still here. How many ruins of supposedly modern science will future generations of Jews find sticking out of the sand?

This same kind of Egyptian folly exists today with those liberals and sceptics whose **double doubt** is really just **double folly**. We believe that the words of Moses and of Yeshua, recorded in the Bible are the words which these two men **actually spoke**. We also believe that the events they spoke of and participated in **actually happened**. The plagues actually tore the Egyptian religion to shreds. The Sea of Reeds actually drowned their proud army, and the voice that shook the mountain became a babe in a manger. When He grew to be a man, He spoke as no man spoke and performed miracles and healings, just as He did for the House of Jacob as they wandered through the wilderness. He died on the cross for the sins of the world and actually rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. To believe otherwise is to be faith impaired and belief challenged, and to set up a belief system which will one day crumble and be torn to shreds.

You see, faith is an interesting kind of perception, and I want to conclude with this. All people believe something and what you believe is important in **two ways**. First what you believe determines the purposes you live for and second, it defines the way you behave as you fulfill those purposes. There are no Jewish suicide bombers, and the bloody Moslem invasions of Europe and India are foreign to a Jewish understanding of the mission of Israel. The church has also performed savage acts of persecution and used the sword, against the clear teachings of the Bible. We may take comfort that finally some elements of the church are asking for forgiveness for the horrible crimes which earlier believes committed. ***Faith with a political agenda has no place in the Bible.***

What you believe needs to be accountable to the reality you perceive around you, and needs to explain the purpose of life in such a way that all mankind, in all ages has a place in the world you are trying to build. **It cannot just be for the benefit of one group, who will dominate over the lesser races of mankind.** The G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob gave his people a mission which has always applied to all mankind: to teach them to worship and to obey the one true G-d. The Heavens which shine above all of our heads declare the glory of this G-d, who is the G-d of Israel. The bright firmament

displays His handiwork and our faith is not just a primitive understanding to comfort us in a confusing world. We serve the Creator of the universe we live in.

The G-d of Israel was never some local god which some primitive people made up to make a hostile world make more sense. He came looking for Abraham, and He pursued Moses through the same desert He led the House of Jacob through. The faith of Israel has always been firmly supernatural, and as Messianic Jews and Gentiles we believe **all the words** of the prophets concerning our glorious Messiah, who died for the benefit of all mankind, in every generation. We also believe in His **return** and in the **Kingdom of G-d** which He will establish on earth.

At this season of the year, He was offered up for the sins of the world and at the Seder we will be celebrating on Monday night He made an amazing double promise. He spoke of both His **death** and also of His **return**. When He spoke of His coming death, He used the matzah as a symbol of His body, and of the cup as a symbol of His blood. He also said that He would not participate in the Passover ritual again, until He could do it in G-d's Kingdom **when He would return**.

So, Mishpocah, at Shabbat HaGadol, let us prepare our hearts and our lives to celebrate our **double freedom** and the promise of the **eternal freedom** which is yet to come. We do not want to go around setting dates or trying to see every world event as a prophecy of the Kingdom. Are you a serial correlationist like Chicken Little? Or do you suffer from the opposite problem? How is your faith? Is it impaired? How is your belief? Is it challenged?

*As Messianic Jews and Gentiles we declare our faith in what the Prophets spoke and in the supernatural purposes of G-d.* We want no part in the folly of Pharaoh, who refused to believe until His world was smashed to pieces and His proud army was drowned. Do not let the folly of this present age, of the modern day Pharaohs, deceive you with its false gods who masquerade as scientific and who make ridiculous claims about the origin of life that have no basis in reality. There is a better way and it concerns belonging to the household of Abraham.

There are two ways to belong to the Household of Abraham, and both of them have one essential spiritual dimension, which is **a call to believe in the supernatural promises of G-d**. You can be a **child of his blood** and you can also be a **child of his faith**. He was chosen by G-d so that his descendents after him would teach the nations the ways of the L-rd, who is the only true G-d. He was also promised that one of his seed would become a blessing to all mankind. Passover is both a celebration of **the liberty of the children of Abraham's blood** and it is also a celebration of **the liberty of all mankind because of the blood which Abraham's seed shed on the cross**.

We celebrate Passover because we believe in the Exodus from Egypt. We celebrate Passover because we believe in the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. We also celebrate it because we believe He will one day return and establish G-d's Kingdom on earth. How is your faith? What do you believe? The seed of Abraham came to Abraham's seed, and the message of His love is being taken to all of Adam's seed, generation by generation, until He returns.

Not everyone was ready when the angel of death flew over the houses of Egypt. Not everybody was ready when G-d's Son died on the cross in fulfillment of the words of the prophets. Not everyone will be ready when He returns. How about you? Are you ready to celebrate the Exodus? Are you ready to celebrate Messiah's Death and Resurrection? Are you ready to celebrate the promise of His return? Are you ready to celebrate the supernatural reality of the only true G-d and the truth of His Word? Or is your world going to crumble and be torn to shreds when our Messiah returns? Let's pray.

Torah Meditation: Parashah Tzav                      Command:

Torah:                                      **Lev. 6:1-8:36**      He Came to Set us Free Forever

**(1)6:6**                                      The fire shall burn continually on the altar and shall not go out.

All the sacrifices point to an eternal reality, to the fire of His soul, which wants to cleanse ours.

**(2) 6:19** The priest who offers the atonement offering shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting.

He wants to celebrate forgiveness with us, just like at the Seder in the year He died.

**(3) 6:23** No offering shall be eaten in the tent of meeting, in order to make atonement for the sanctuary, this offering shall be consumed in the fire.

He cleansed the Heavens, when He poured out His soul. And when His earthly body was consumed, He was ready to rise and return to the Heavens.

**(4) 8:24** He brought Aaron and his sons and put blood on the lobe of their right ear, upon the thumb of their right hand and upon the big toe of their right foot.

Our ears (what we think) and our hands (what we do) and our feet (where we go) need to be set free, cleansed and offered back to Him as living sacrifices, in faith and obedience. How's yours doing?

Haftarah: **(Jer. 7:21-8:3; 9:22, 23) replaced with: Mal. 3:4-24**

**(5) 4:1** For behold the day comes, burning like a furnace. All the arrogant and all the wicked shall be like straw; the day which is coming shall consume them says Adonai (YHVH) tsev'ot – the L-rd of Hosts.

The fire of the altar reflects an awesome heavenly reality, which He set the House of Jacob free to proclaim to all nations. There is only one G-d, and one Day our Messiah shall return and consume all wickedness. How much of our lives will be consumed when He comes to set us free forever?

**(6) 4:5** Behold I send you Elijah the prophet, before the Day of the L-rd (YHVH) comes, this great and frightening day.

Elijah came and spoke of the awesome Day which is still to come. At Pesach, we celebrate freedom from Egypt and freedom from sin. But we also celebrate the end of the world and the coming wrath of a righteous G-d. No more Mister Nice Guy. Our message is a two edged sword and every year, during the Feast of Unleavened bread, we get another opportunity to examine our ways and get our lives back in spiritual shape – which is the real point of the feast – and which was all made possible because of the sacrifice of Messiah. Let us listen to Elijah and turn our hearts back to the L-rd and to His Word. Let's let Him teach us how to be set free.

Brit Chadashah: **Heb. 8:1-6 (L); 9:11-28 (F)**

**(7) 9:28** Even so, Messiah, who offered Himself only once to carry the sins of many men, will appear a second time without sin for those who are waiting for Him for their salvation.

He's coming back. He delivered His people from Egypt and He delivered all people free from the Egypt of this world. That is phase one. This Passover, we need to ask our selves if we are ready for phase two, because it is coming, whether we are ready or not. Are you ready? Amen.