

15 Nisan, 5772 (07/04/12) *Shabbat Pesach: Shir HaShirim* J. M. Terrett

Shabbat Pesach The Sabbath of Passover Successful Exit Strategy

Torah: Exodus 12:21-51

(1) 12:22. When the L-RD passes to strike, He shall see the blood on the lintel and door posts and not permit the destroyer from entering to strike.

(2) 12:32. Take your sheep and your cattle as you said, go and bless me

(3) 12:38 a multitude of people of every kind went up with them who also had considerable flocks of sheep and cattle.

(4) At the end of 430 years, the same day, all the hosts of the L-RD came out of the land of Egypt.

Haftarah: Jos. 3:5-7; 5:2-15; 6:1, 27

(5) 5:12 the day after Passover, the manna ceased when they ate the grain of the country. They no longer had manna but ate the products of the country that year.

(6) 5:13. Are you with us or our enemies?

Brit Chadashah: John 1:29-31; 10:14-18

(7) 1:29 The next day he say Yeshua coming to him and said, behold the Lamb of G-d who takes away the sin of the world.

Psalm 2 Song of Songs Jewish Hero: Set-up and clean-up crew

The Song of Songs is a controversial book because it is the story of polygamous love between Solomon and someone called the Shulamite. It contains some of the most exotic and beautiful imagery in the Bible and it is traditional to read it on the Sabbath of Passover because we understand at least three things.

First of all, G-d loves each of us and all of us with an intensity that is best approximated by sexual attraction because He finds each of us beautiful and wonderful (as if He had a crush on us). Second of all, we are called to love G-d back with an intensity that is best approximated by sexual attraction, because when we come to know Him we discover that He is wonderful and beautiful.

Lastly, He is a jealous lover and does not want our heart or life allegiance to be given to anyone or anything else – not because He is afraid that we will find anyone or anything more wonderful or more beautiful, but because His love is inexhaustible and unchanging.

As we keep falling back in love with Him, we discover not only how wonderful and beautiful He is, but also how His love can lift us up and fill us and protect us – we will always be safe on our pilgrimage through this life as long as we remain in a committed relationship with our L-rd.

I want to briefly look at seven passages from this book (or scroll) and build a picture of this reciprocal love for you this morning – the love which released us from Egypt and which sent Him to the cross for your sins and mine.

As we prepare to celebrate the resurrection (which this year the date of which should be Monday – Sunday sunset to Monday sunrise) and as we spend the week unleavened (because it took them a week to get out Egyptian held territory) and begin the 50 day countdown to Shavuot (the fifty days it took them to make it to Mount Sinai, we need to understand that at its bottom line, our relationship with the L-rd will always be a love story – where we are constantly rediscovering the wonder and the beauty of the L-rd and where we are constantly being rediscovered by the L-rd.

This also marks the beginning of my 41st year in the L-rd (March 28, 1972) and if we ever feel our relationship with the L-rd is wearing thin, or needs some work, we need to let His love for us and our love for Him rekindle our passion for Him and let this powerful force drag us out of any bondage, pain or foolishness we have become entangled with on our pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave.

Let's look at these passages:

6:1 *Where has your beloved gone, o most beautiful of women? Which way has he gone, we will seek for him with you.*

5:9 *What does your well beloved have more than another o most beautiful of women? What does he have your well beloved, that you charge us so? (Ps. 45:2 [3 français])*

Do you realize how beautiful and wonderful our King is? When we say He is beautiful beyond description, it means that as beautiful as anything and everything is in this life, nothing can hold a candle to Him – not even the ark or the temple. Is He the most beautiful thing in your life and what are you holding a candle to?

4:7. *You are entirely beautiful my friend, there is no flaw in you. (Ps. 50:2' Is. 61:10)*

As hard as it may be for us to fathom, with all of our flaws and our sinfulness, He finds us beautiful and He sees us as we shall be one day (I John 3:1-3). Are you letting this vision which G-d has of you be the basis for how you live and how you look at yourself. When we realize how special we are to Him, it should really affect the way we live.

6:10 *who is the one who appears like the dawn, beautiful like the moon, pure as the sun, but fearsome as the hosts under their banners.*

Even after having said all of this about the depth of the intimacy we are called to enjoy with our King, I've got to admit that He still scares me.

Not because He is so ferocious, but because He is so painfully beautiful and all the beauty and wonder of the world is but a small reflection (inkling) of the full manifestation of His love and beauty which will one day be revealed for us.

Is your vision of Him too small? Are you still in awe of Him (slightly scared)? He is not like Tinkerbell, who depends on us believing in Him to exist – it is the opposite, we need to let the awesome and fearful reality of Him buoy us up and renew us and burn away the lesser allegiances which suck us dry and try to pull us away from our Awesome G-d.

One more thought here. We are so fortunate that G-d is who is He and is like His word describes Him, because if He weren't, there would be nothing we could do about it. Some of the gods of the nations and even of this modern idolatrous era of materialistic humanism and evolutionary relativism, are ugly, mean and unreliable. I'm so glad our G-d is never like that.

2:16 (6:3) I am my beloved's and he is mine. He pastures his flock among the lilies. 7:10 [11 fr.] I am my beloved's and his desire is for me. His banner over me is love (2:4) (Jer. 31:3; 54:7, 8; Jn. 3:16; I John 4:8)

We are His betrothed and He is our Good Shepherd and the plans He has for us are good and not evil, despite all the evil and pain and betrayal and foolishness we have to wade through in this life. He is the L-rd of our journey with an exit strategy for every situation we encounter. Look for His love, live in His love, and live for His love, cause that's what it's all about.

1:2 "your love is better than wine (4:10; 7:9 (10 fr.)) (Ps. 34:8 [9 français])

C. S. Lewis once said that all of life's pleasures are merely shadows or reflections of the real pleasures of heaven which are waiting for us. I would agree, but would take it one step further. The closest thing to heaven and the clearest taste of heaven is His love – because He does taste good. Have you tasted His goodness? Are you tasting His goodness? What does He taste like to you? What do you taste like to Him?

7:14 "The madrigals give forth their scent and we have all the best fruit at our doors, new and old (Matt. 13:52)

He will never let us starve or be abandoned – spiritually first and foremost, which is what really counts. If you live in spiritual abundance, it doesn't matter if you are gagging with perfume, fighting off cancer or just watching your kids and grandkids grow up (as we prepare for another provincial election).

He will always give us new and wants us to stock up on the old, so our hearts and lives are never empty. Are you taking time to stock up? What are you stocking up on?

7:6 "Put me as a seal upon your heart and a seal upon your arm, for love is stronger than death and jealousy is as inflexible as the dwelling place of the dead, its desires are fiery, a flame of YHVH (Ex. 20:5, 6)

Lover's quarrels can be mighty ferocious – the current one between Israel and G-d has lasted nearly 2,000 years and even though it is usually the man who has to admit He is wrong (cause he usually is), even though we are the bride, we have to admit our wrongs and be reconciled to our lover. His anger lasts a moment, His love is forever. He is ready to forgive and to cherish us again. He will not budge from His holiness, but He is always willing to welcome us home and not keep throwing our foolishnesses in our face.

Is He the seal on your arm? Has He sealed your heart? Are you fighting with Him or letting Him love you? As we wait to remember the resurrection and as we wait for our resurrection, let us be sure to focus our hearts and lives on the things which really matter and not on those which will only make Him mad. He won't budge, will you?

8:14 "Flee my beloved! Be like the gazelle and the young stag upon the mountains of spices.

Sometimes we are chased by the dragon who spews water out of his mouth to drown us. Sometimes our enemies chase us into the ovens, or throw us to the lions, or relentlessly pursue us with temptations, trials and compromises.

He spent 30 years fighting and winning and wants to show us not only His excellent exit strategies, but also His excellent fleeing strategies. Never let life corner you – look for His ways of escape and His strategies and attitudes (I Cor. 10:13), for indeed, we are condemned to be happy in Him (or He will make us miserable until we stop being miserable).

Chag Pesach Samaech (Happy holy Passover). May this be a year of love and intimacy with our indescribably beautiful L-rd as He cherishes us, holds us, picks us up and gives us all the swift kicks we need, as often as we need them. May your life in all of its splendour and foolishness always be about Him and what he is doing in your life – it is the only worthwhile how in town.