

10 Nisan, 5766 (April, 8, 2006) *Shabbat HaGadol: May I See Your Boarding Pass?* J. M. Terrett

Malachi 3:4- (24 TNCH) 4:6

On this day, the tenth of the month, the House of Jacob was to gather a lamb or a kid for each household and keep it until dusk on the fourteenth, for the first Passover sacrifice. Now there would be no turning back. At some point they would have had to procure the bones of Joseph. They would also have to make or purchase tents and wagons and make sure they had enough camping equipment – and also dispose of whatever they were not prepared to carry.

There are four mighty interventions of G-d's Kingdom, while we wait for the fifth and final:

1. The Flood
2. The Tower of Babel
3. The Exodus
4. Calvary and the Empty Tomb
5. The Day of the L-rd

Each of these was a kingdom intervention, with both judgment and redemption. Eight were spared during the Flood. One household was selected at Babel and the line of Abraham began. A whole nation was spared during the Exodus, and the whole of creation and of humanity (past, present and future) was spared when our Messiah went to the cross and rose three days later. Our special portion for this Shabbat, Mal. 3:4-4:6 speaks five times of the Day of the L-rd, and this is blessed event which we are counting down to every Shabbat, every L-rd's Table and every Pesach.

As they prepared for the first Pesach, the House of Jacob was going to witness the most frightening of the plagues – this year I am calling the last plague: "The Night of the Screams". Not only has Gd defeated all the Egyptian gods (Ex. 12:12), now He is going to redeem His people by the blood of the lamb and strike down those who have put their faith in false gods.

I don't know how many Egyptians put the blood on their doors, but it only worked for those who were circumcised (Ex. 12:44-49), because it is only covenant believers which the blood of the lamb protects against the wrath of G-d. The blood of G-d's Cosmic Lamb will only protect those whose hearts are circumcised (Deut. 10:16). Is your heart circumcised? Is His blood on the doorposts of your heart?

Each year at Passover, we need to ask ourselves how our packing is going, because we ever only be pilgrims and strangers passing through this life (I Peter 2:11). What are you giving your eternal allegiance to? What are you giving your temporary allegiance to? Too many believers get these two mixed up.

I Cor. 3:9-15 and I Cor. 5:6-8 speak of spiritual house cleaning, which our homework every day, every week, every month, and seven or nine times a year. So, boys and girls, did you do your homework this week?

Here is a final thought before I walk you through the Malachi passage. There are two kinds of grace we can experience in the L-rd, His saving or cleansing grace and His building or growing grace. I believe, just as He gave us "talents" or giftings according to our abilities (Phil. 2:13 and Eph. 2:10), both of with come with an expiry date, so does the grace which He showers upon us. I am not saying that His grace will ever run out, but if He has to keep pouring His saving grace into our lives, because we keep running around in circles – going back to the mud and swallowing what we have vomited, then there may not be enough time left in our lives for Him to pour His building, growing grace into our lives, so that we can mature, reach our full potential and accomplish the theme tasks which He has called us to.

Malachi 3:4-4:6 here are the verses I want to comment on:

- 3:4 - former days and passed years
- 3:5 - Judgment precedes the Kingdom and it is FIRST against the unfaithful among the faithful – here it is sevenfold: (1) witchcraft practitioners, (2) adulterers, (3) those who swear falsely, (4) those who cheat their employees, (5) those who oppress the widow, (6) and the orphan, and (7) who cheat strangers (goyim).
- 3:6 - G-d does not change, nor do His requirements. Israel is diminished, but is not (yet) consumed, so that we may finally learn. Learn what?
- 3:7 - teshuvah (repentance) Return to Me and I will return to you
- 3:8-12 - As an agricultural nation, Israel was to bring in the tithes three times a year, in order for the means of production to be blessed. When you bring in a portion of whatever increase you have, and give it to G-d, He will bless your means of production as well. There you've heard me preach on tithing.
- 3:13 - Some of us are so rude with G-d, and we all say: "How have we been rude with G-d?" Two ways: (1) Are we there yet? And (2) How come you bless the wicked and let the righteous and the innocent suffer?

I don't know how many times I am going to have to keep repeating this, mishpocah, The wicked will be judged in eternity, even if they escape in this life. ALL the murderers, idolaters, fornicators and perpetrators and monsters will get there's, when that big huge whopping "eventually" becomes the magnificent beyond all description "Kingdom" comes. Therefore be patient and do three things: believe in His promises, be obedient to His Word, and wait, which brings me to my final comments, cause I know you are all waiting for the nosh.

- DAY - 3:17; which I am preparing (sound familiar – I go to prepare a place)
 4:1; which is coming, closer every second
 4:1; which is coming to burn (reduce the cosmos back to its basic atomic elements – gather all the entropy and restore creation)
 4:3; Our boots were made for stomping – for the final ash-whipping
 4:5. Elijah has come BEFORE the Day, and YHVH has come, we know that His is coming back – for us that is the biggest message of Pesach and of Judaism – may His Kingdom be established in your lifetime and in the lifetime of all the House of Israel, speedily, soon and all say: 'amayn'.

As we look what we are storing up in the habits of our lives and in the depths of our hearts, let us do what Israel did from the tenth of Nisan, until the fourteenth – let's get ready to go.

Let me switch symbols a bit. Have you asked the Lamb into your heart (the home of your spirit)? Are you ready to let His slaughter give you access to His blood, so you may put it on the doorposts of your heart, so that His Final Judgment will pass over you? How much of your life is going to burn? How much **chametz** is lurking in the corners of your heart and in the habits of your life?

May Shabbat Gadol bring you Shalom Gadol as you keep on doing your homework and as you learn to move on through His saving grace and let His growing, building grace accomplish His purposes in your life. Let ask it another way: "when are you going to be ready to give up the darkness, the rage, the bitterness, the fear, the shame and let Him take the ethereal weight of your light afflictions and turn them into an enormous beyond measure, eternal weight of glory?

After Aslan brought the universe of Narnia to an end, all the generations of all the people of Narnia passed before Him, some to enter His blessedness, some to go into the darkness of His judgment – all, that is, except a little circle of dwarves, who bitterness and blindness, made them unable and unwilling to see. As they partook of the feast of the Lion, they convinced themselves they were eating dirty straw – they were locked into a hell of their own bitterness – this is the greatest peril for believers who go through trials and for people who are trauma survivors.

Are you sitting around gnawing on bitterness and filth, or letting the light of the Kingdom shine through your pain and the healing light of His wings set you free to love, forgive, and obey? Shalom et shavua tov.