

15 Av, 5765 (Aug. 20, 2005) Shabbat **Nachamu:** *It's Nearly Over, Again* J. M. Terrett

Vaetchanan

And I pleaded

Torah:

Deut. 3:23-7:11

Haftarah:

Is. 40: 1-26

Brit Chadashah:

Mark 12:28-34 (L) Matt. 23:31-39 (F)

How many times in your life have you felt like you've hit rock bottom? How many times in your life have you felt things begin to shift at rock bottom, like you can finally start to rebuild and climb out of the hole (the valley)? How many times have you wished you could break the cycle of serial setbacks and crises which seem to bushwhack you with annoying and alarming regularity? When we look at the history of Israel in the Bible and of Judaism since the days of the destruction of the Second Temple, we see a similar generational pattern of serial setbacks, which is even reflected in the human history of most of our planet.

And yet in our own lives and in Israel's life, and indeed in the life of our entire planet, this cycle of serial setbacks does not have to occur, if we could only figure out how to break the pattern and make some sustained personal, international and generational progress. Now here's the paradox. Since the beginnings of the industrial revolution, the potential for people, at least in the developed nations to have an amazing quality of life has never been better. Social historians actually say that more human progress has been made in the last 200 years, than in the last two thousand years.

But there is a downside, a fairly ugly one and it is at least a triple backlash which may be slowly choking our human progress and setting things in place for the eventual final destruction of all life on our planet, and I am not being an extremist or an alarmist when I say this. The three greatest challenges of the modern world are warfare, industrial pollution and the moral collapse of the economically developed nations of the world.

That is to say that as we have developed a means to remove nearly all the natural barriers to health and happiness, we have also created a technology of destruction and pollution on a scale that this world has never seen before. How does all of this relate to Shabbat Nachamu?

As we come to the end of another calendar year (only seven more weeks to Rosh Hashanah) it is time again for us to begin to consider our ways and see if, at least, we could not break the generational cycle of serial setbacks in our own lives as individuals, and in the life of our community – and indeed in the life of the whole Messianic Movement and on into the life of the whole community of our beloved messiah.

"This little life of mine, I'm gonna make it shine" and we are going to change the world, one life at a time. How? Why bother? I want to use these two questions to initiate my annual build up to the High Holy days and to give you a lot to think about as we move into the fall of another year.

First of all, we live in a society which has largely turned its back on, what I will call, for lack of a better word, "other worldly" spirituality, and on a traditional, religious explanation for the origin and the meaning of life. We have created what may be the biggest spiritual vacuum in human history, where on the one hand we have the most technologically developed society ever developed on earth, and on the other, a society where most of the problems we face are a direct result of our lifestyle.

We are part of a generation of people who are entertaining themselves to death as we pollute the planet and deplete its natural resources, in a lifestyle where we are digging our graves with our own teeth, and with our own immoral behaviour. I know of no other period of human history where the three major causes of death of our young men have got nothing to do with warfare, with famine or with some of the super plagues which have struck societies in the past.

For the first time in human history, sexually transmitted diseases, increasingly are killing more people across the globe than another other kind of infection. Cancer and other immunal deficiencies are also striking down millions across the globe because the level of industrial pollution is rising faster than we have the will to deal with it. As well growing numbers of young people are adopting self destructive lifestyles because even with all this life has to offer, it does not offer any reasonable purpose for living, except a dead end hedonism – turn it up, rip it up, shoot it up and die young.

Spirituality, however, is not dead in all of this, and on Shabbat Nachamu, we need to understand that people are still hungry for **purpose** and **meaning**, but perhaps we need to learn something from the world of advertising and examine the effectiveness, (or lack thereof) of the packaging and marketing of the spirituality we are offering to people who are looking for a solution to the meaninglessness of their consumer, pleasure driven lives – I know I'm misquoting a video but Jack, this time I'm not sure that even Shakespeare could have said any better.

We somehow need to get across to people that unless their lives have an otherworldly, spiritual purpose, they have no reason not to cheat, to steal, to kill and to fornicate until their exhausted, infected and polluted old bodies return to the dust they where created from. **The media now increasingly portrays traditional spirituality as a red neck no brainer, run by an abusive narrow minded group of homophobic hypocrites, with lousy music and really boring religious celebrations.** Most people, however, still want to be baptised or circumcised into religion and most still want a religious wedding and a religious funeral, but the synagogues and the churches are largely empty for most of the year, except for these transition moments and at major religious festivals.

Shabbat Nachamu is a time for us to consider how we can look both at how we integrate our own faith into this spiritually hostile world, and how we can break the cycle of serial set backs in our own lives, which our world full of its technological wonders has come no closer to solving. Yes, for the second time in human history, we possess the social and the technological capacity to bring about the complete eradication of our species.

The first time this happened, G-d flooded the planet, and scattered our first ancestors, as a warning to all future generations and He set in place His solution for the problems of what is really wrong with our planet – we go from spiritual bankruptcy to spiritual corruption, again and again, without being able to break this cycle of serial self destruction. I am not against technology – I think flush toilets and DVD players are the greatest inventions since bookstores and central heating. **If we do not deal with the spiritual roots of the problems of mankind, we will just delay the inevitable, and instead of a flood to wash away the moral scum of a spiritually diseased mankind, our own planet will kill us all.** How? When there is no more clean air to breathe, no more clean water to drink and no more fossil fuel to power our stupid little toys and provide us with the increasingly poisonous junk we call food and which is giving us less and less nourishment as it gums up our metabolisms, we all drop like flies.

How is this a merciful prediction? There is another way, personally and socially, but probably not nationally or internationally. **The biblical spirituality we believe in teaches us there are always natural consequences for the spiritual and moral decisions which people and nations make.** We all just have one life to live, as each generation passes on the self destructive spiritual cycle to its kids, so lets covenant together to break that cycle in our own lives and make sound spiritual decisions in our own lives and pass on this heritage of spirituality to our children's children, until the human folly of all mankind pushes our planet over the edge into oblivion and the L-rd returns to **harvest the souls** which truly belong to Him.

We want to learn to celebrate our community expression of our faith in new and meaningful ways, so we can equip ourselves and our children to live lives full of purpose and meaning **in the high tech spiritual cess pool of modern living.** We will talk more about this exciting development at the Mishpocah Meeting after service. We want to examine the decisions we are personally making daily and constantly and understand that our lives need to be shifted so that they turn around the cycles of the L-rd. And that it is only in this way that we can move from **repeatedly cuddling rock bottom** and let the **increasing momentum of our personal spiritual renewal** move us upwards and onwards towards the Day of His Returning.

I saw a sign on a church recently which defined true worldliness as living a life with no concept of eternity and I want to conclude with this powerful thought. We all need to understand that once we die, and we all shall do so one day, we are all going to stand and be judged before **the True Reality, the real spiritual and physical administration which runs the universe.** All the politically correct propaganda for an immoral lifestyle devoid of otherworldly spirituality, will only plug up your soul and build up a weight of eternal judgment from which there is no escape.

It is as simple as that. You are either in tune with the G-d of creation who is running the show, or you are spiritually insane, living in the worst kind of spiritual denial. Shabbat Nachamu changes the liturgical direction of the year and, once again gives us an opportunity to consider our ways and return to that which is more important than even the air you breathe, your spirituality and the eternal destiny of your soul.

Two verses: Jer. 6:16 and John 3:15-21 and then we'll pray. Have you stood in the ways of your life and asked for the old paths? There is a judgment coming, and if you are not spending your time getting ready for it, you are just heaping up fuel for the eventual destruction of your life and maybe even your soul. Are you coming to the light because your deeds are light, or are you skulking in the darkness, because somewhere in the dark depths of your soul, you know better and are afraid to let go of the darkness which is building the dark side of Mordor in your life?

Let's pray.