

*The Good News Shoes*

Vaetchanan                      And I Pleaded Reaching the Point of no Return, Joyfully

Torah:                              Dt. 3:23-7:11

(1) 3:26. ***But the L-RD was angry with me because of you and He did not listen to me. The L-RD said to me, that's enough; do not speak to me anymore about this matter.*** When G-d closes a door, you will just knock yourself out banging on it. Look for the ones He will always open.

(2) 4:3. ***You shall add nothing to that which I prescribe to you and you shall take away nothing from it. You shall observe the commandments of the L-RD your G-d in the manner which they were prescribed to you.*** It is never a do it yourself undertaking, where you make it up as you go – it is a complete package deal, with no substitutions, additions or deletions. Take it or it will leave you.

(3) 4:19; 28. ***Watch over your soul for fear that in seeing the sun, the moon and the stars and all the army of the heavens you are not lead astray to bow down before their presence and to worship them, for these are things that the L-RD your G-d has given as a portion to all the peoples under the entire sky. . . And there you shall serve gods which are the work of the hands of men, made of wood and stone. Which can neither see nor hear, or eat or smell.*** If you mix up the Creator with His creation, you will worship limited, helpless things instead of the limitless, almighty One.

(4) 5:22. ***These are the words which the L-RD pronounced out loud on the mountain in the midst of the fire, the clouds and the darkness and which He addressed to your entire assemble, without adding anything.*** He wants you to hear His voice and then He wants you not to listen to anyone or anything else which claims to speak for Him. You cannot go back on what He has said, nor should you add to what He has said.

Haftarah:                         Is. 40:1-26

(5) 40:5. ***Then shall the glory of the L-RD be revealed and at that same moment, all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the L-rd has spoken.*** We are moving towards the supreme moment when the truth shall be revealed to all mankind, in all of its nations and generations, whether they believe it, receive it or not. I do not want to be politically correct; I want to be cosmically and eternally correct,

(6) 40:26. ***Lift your eyes up and look – who has created these things? Who has made all their hosts to march in order? He calls all of them by their name, by His great power and by His mighty strength and there is not one of them which is missing (or out of step, flawed).*** We serve the author of everything – the only one without beginning and without end, wonder and mighty beyond our ability to describe or even realize.

Brit Chadashah:                Matt. 23:31-39

(7) 23:37. ***Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to you, how many times have I desired to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings? But you were not willing.*** The storm of life will come, whether we want them to or not and we have to decide whether we will seek shelter in Him or be battered to pieces unnecessarily. Putting our faith in Him is reaching a point of no return, because where else can we find an eternal refuge and who else speaks the words of everlasting life? In Him we have passed the point of no return, joyfully.

Psalm 90                         Jewish Hero: Isaiah (who gave the bad news and the good news with great courage)

In this series, we have been looking at different pieces of our **spiritual equipment** that we are going to need to both be equipped with and know how to use, if we are to compete successfully in our event and finish the race with **medal contention** – and not fail through negligence, laziness or lack of training. We have looked at the first two pieces of equipment (the belt and the breastplate), but now we are going to look at the equipment which will allow us to get places in the L-rd, without **damaging our feet** and I call them **the good news shoes**.

Sharing our faith is probably the most important feature of our spiritual walk with the L-rd, next to our own faith and our own righteousness – because He wants us to provide other people with **the opportunity which He provided us with**, so that the Good News is shared throughout the generations and never becomes the property of any **one person or group of people**.

However, shoes are not an **aggressive** piece of our armour and wearing the good news shoes doesn't put us **permanently on the offensive**, looking for unbelievers to stomp on or pagans to aim high kicks at. Wearing the good news shoes doesn't put us on the **defensive** either, where we are always getting ready to run away when we are presented with some pretty intense opposition. Learning how to walk with the good news shoes is an important lesson, if we do not want our proclamation to suffer from **neglect** or **abuse**.

Too many people are focused on getting the **whole message** out each time they share and they want to share their faith in a way that makes them feel good and look smart, even if the way they share what they share is not well received and ends up **alienating more people that it convinces**.

This morning I want to briefly speak about **two extremes** with the good news shoes: using them to **run away** and using them to **walk all over people**. Let me first speak about running away. Sometimes believers want **ideal conditions** for sharing that contain no risk and rather than get shut down or being told they are being intrusive or offensive, they run away at the first sign or **resistance** and are so afraid of rejection that they miss out on good opportunities to share leading up to the Gospel.

You see, we often have to **sow the seed** and **prepare the ground** in people's lives before we give them the message – we want to make sure people are ready to hear **before we cast our pearls before the swine who will want to turn and tear us and our message to shreds**, which leads me to my second point – **sharing without walking all over people**.

Sharing our faith often begins with **three prerequisites** that must be in place before we jump on people and try and pry their ears open so we can shove the Gospel in. Sometimes we have to **win a hearing** by the way we **live** and the way we **respond** to the ups and downs of life (I P. 3:15). Sometimes we are just called to be another link in the chain towards the person being willing to listen to our message and we need to become good at speaking **a good word that will soften people up** so that they will be willing to listen to the word.

This can take the form of how we talk about **news events**, and how we talk about the things which happen to people be they ever so good or ever so bad. Sometimes this can take the form of **solid advice** in situations which require problem solving, comfort or even discipline. This is what the Scriptures mean when they say we are to be **light** and **salt**, so that the heart and the life become prepared to listen to the one story which explains everything in life – the story which reveals how the universe is put together and what it all means.

Lastly, we need to be aware of **appropriate appointments of G-d**, where we realize that we have been put in a place **to share or just to shine without sharing**. Recognizing divine appointments takes practice and people will be patient with us if we are **gracious**, and **open** and **honest** and if they realize that we are neither looking for any opportunity to pounce or are always prepared to back pedal to avoid talking about things which might cause embarrassment or misunderstandings.

As well, sometimes people focus on **one single aspect** of the Gospel and do not let the Spirit of G-d guide them and guide the people they are called to speak with. The Spirit will give us **respectful boldness** and will show us when and how far to go with people, so we avoid the conflicts which turn people off and make them avoid us because they do not want another argument or confrontation.

You see, we understand that there is a **day coming** when G-d, through Yeshua shall judge the hearts and lives of all mankind and that those who have not accepted the L-rd, or who have not responded to His message and to His leading, will be **excluded forever** from his presence and suffer the flames of eternal judgment, but we should be careful about telling people that if they do not respond to **our presentation**, that they have put their eternal souls at risk.

We need to be careful not to **jump to the end of the message** and threaten people with hell fire and brimstone before we take the time to understand the **issues** which are keeping them from making a decision for the L-rd. **We need to be careful that they way we share what we share is not one of the issues which are keeping people from wanting to come to the L-rd.**

Now there are some people with **sincere questions** and **honest challenges** to the Gospel – all evolutionists are not evil people and all liberal people are not people who are trying their best to twist and pervert the truth of the Bible. Prov. 27:7 says there are so many hungry souls eating junk.

If we adopt an **adversarial stance** when we share with people, we are just **putting up walls** and inviting them to bring out the **heavy artillery** and get ready for a **kamikaze fight to the death**, where the best argument takes home the prize and both combatants become locked in a win lose, **ultimate spiritual fighting match**, where honour and pride are at stake.

There are people I will not share with, but before whom I will not back down, but with whom I take the time to listen to their **honest concerns** and also take the time to build a **dialogue** with, **so I can better understand why they believe what they do and so that they can understand why I believe what I believe** – without turning it into a debate, because you can win the argument and **lose the soul** and can **slam the door to the Gospel**, instead of opening it to a dialogue where their **spiritual issues are addressed with the same respect that we want them to give to our spiritual issues.**

Now I am not afraid that someone will be able to talk me out of my faith, even though I know there are people more **articulate** and **smarter** than me. You see, I believe in the G-d who is over all and whose hand has made the heavens and **who is never threatened by the raging of the heathens.**

I look at all the challenges as **fodder for His Spirit** to deepen my walk with Him and to build bridges so that the eternal truths of the Gospel can take root in another generation as we come to grips with the **spiritual priorities** G-d is using to get through to them.

Each of us has a **story** and each of us accepts an explanation which helps us to understand life and our place in it. When we share our faith, we place ourselves in a situation where our understanding comes under as much **scrutiny** as the understanding we are trying to figure out a way to relate the Gospel to. As I have already said, instead of getting all **threatened** and **argumentative**, I look at these spiritual discussions as opportunities to watch the L-rd in action as He shows us how to relate the truth of the Gospel to another new context which is crying out for truth and meaning **with a hunger and a thirst which we must not interpret as hostility**, but rather as a caution, which will resist any truth **which cannot hold its own in the arena of their challenges**.

I want to **share** as much of the Gospel as I am able when the timing is right. I want to **demonstrate** the truth of the Gospel, when sharing is not a possibility and I want to avoid causing a **hostile reaction** by the way I say what I say – sometimes this is unavoidable, but it is not the kind of presentation I want to aim for – and it is not the kind of exchange which I would call **successful** or **positive**.

Sharing our faith – and walking with our **good news shoes** puts us in situations where we have to tread carefully, if we want to have a **positive impact** in people's lives and prepare them to be able to hear and receive the message of G-d's love in our blessed Messiah.

While we step out and run the risk of a **confrontation** or a **rejection**, we need to learn to recognize that this is often a sign that we should **walk away** and not try and win. When we do this, we are stopping fight with people who just want to get the **last word** and upset our faith and prove to themselves that we are ridiculous people who believe ridiculous things and who will not listen to reason (or to opposing perspectives).

**We are ready to walk away if the person is not ready to hear what we have to say** – but we do not always want to walk away from the life or from positive contact with the person who disagrees with us, we just have to be **patient** and **learn** to be salty and be light as we trust the L-rd to give us the wisdom to answer their objections, rather than getting trapped into fruitless agreements with them.

We say as much as we can and we do our best to build an understanding and realize that we are to prepare the soil and do the believer's equivalent of the Hippocratic Oath: bottom line, cause no harm. If we just want to win the argument, we are not using our shoes to bring the good news (2 Tim. 2:24-26), we are just **stomping on toes**.

We want to avoid the two extremes I have talked to you about – we want to avoid always **running away** and we want to avoid **always being ready for a fight**, so we can ram our faith down someone's throat and tell them that they are going to hell if they do not listen to us.

We want to be aware of the **three prerequisites** of sharing. We first have to **win a hearing** by what we say and how we live. Next, we have to understand that we may just be called to be **another link** in the chain and **prepare the ground for the seed** which will come later by being salty and a light. When people aren't ready, we need to be careful not to **jump the gun** because it feels good to get scrappy and show people how dumb they are. Lastly, we have to learn to **recognize divine appointments** and trust the L-rd to help us to share in such away as the message is well received AND to walk away with dignity when it will not be well received.

Our shoes are the **good news shoes** of His peace and His love and we should not get stuck in a fight to win a point and we should not use threats of hell fire as if our sharing was the last chance someone gets before it is too late.

There are other **details** and **situations** I could get into, but we have to know that we are called to be as **wise as serpents and as harmless as doves**, and not the other way around. I love dialoguing with people about my faith, even with those who belong to **another religion** or who have rejected **all religion**. I do not enjoy a fight or an argument and will walk away from those, just because they are a waste of time and my shoes are meant for sharing the good news and for preparing the way for this sharing to occur and not for running away or for stomping on people's toes. I share as much as I can and wait on the L-rd to work in people's lives until they are ready to hear more, **nothing more and nothing less**.

Next week, we will be looking at the shield of faith, which is where the real battle for our souls occurs.

Let's pray.