

11 Av 5763 (Aug. 9, 2003) **Shabbat Nachamu (Sabbath of Mercy)** J. M. Terrett

V"Et'chanan And I Plead

In keeping with our customs, as a Messianic Jewish congregation, we follow the following format, when we examine the weekly bible passages. Instead of having seven people come up to read or chant the Torah portion, and other people come up to chant or read the Haftarah, or prophetic portion, we ask one person to prepare a short meditation, based on the Bible portion. The person selects four verses from the Torah, two from the Haftarah, and one from the Brit Chadashah (New Testament), and they weave them into a meditation which illustrates some insights which their study of the passage brought to them.

Today, I am doing the meditation, and will do it a little differently. I am combining my sermon and the meditation, and I will read my summary introduction. Then I will read the verses which I have selected, and comment on them as they relate to my topic: "Oh Mercy". For a full version of these comments, I refer you to our website, where you can listen to a video clip of my discourse.

OH MERCY!

Today is the first of seven special Shabbats, called **Shabbats of Consolation**, and begins the slow climb out of the pits of despair towards the High Holy Days. The Torah portion records the second giving of the Ten Commandments and the Haftarah Portion speaks of life after judgment, and is a call to both walk with the L-rd and to understand that His purposes will be fulfilled, both in this life and in the world to come. He Himself is coming **FIRST** to judge, then to **GATHER** His people. The Brit Chadashah portion I selected speaks of this desire to gather and to cherish Jerusalem and speaks of the long spiritual winter of the Jewish people.

Compassion and comfort from the L-rd is not always presented from a balanced perspective, because in dealing with the wonderful mercy and forgiveness of our gracious G-d, people often forget that His judgment is not removed, nor diminished by His mercy –one does not cancel out the other, nor do they conflict. *Compassion, gives us the opportunity to return to the G-d who will not change, and to learn to walk in His ways, because that is the only reason He extends His compassion on us.*

He does not store up His wrath to pour it furiously upon evildoers, nor does He extend His mercy freely to the righteous – in this life. He reminds us of three things. There is a life to come. He does not change either Himself or His requirements. He sets us free to fulfill those requirements –both the positive and the negative ones.

Sometimes people misunderstand His compassion and misrepresent His wrath, because they do not see them as consistent with both who G-d is and what he wants from us, generation by generation, until the Day of His return. Sometimes I am told that I make

too many excuses for people and even that I indulge fools too gladly, and that I am too prepared to give people more slack than is good for them and for me.

In answer to my sometime detractors, I want to leave you with one thought, as we go through the verses I have selected, and which comes from the Apostle Paul: "This is a certain word, entirely worthy to be received, that Yeshua HaMashiach came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first."

G-d scares me and so does His judgment. Unfortunately, it does not always stop me from sinning and from indulging my carnal nature. It does keep me coming back to Him and will keep me coming back to Him, as long as I draw breath, because I need both His judgment and His mercy. I know who I am and what I am capable of, and I want to serve Him because He knows me and takes me as seriously as I take Him, and as I take myself.

How seriously do you take yourself? Do you take Him? Lets go through these verses and allow His mercy to convince us that His judgments are true and will one day be final. Anything that does not take this into perspective is not worthy of our attention. Ever.

Let's look at the verses and allow His compassion to comfort us, alongside His judgment.

Torah: **Deut. 3:23-7:11**

(1) 3:26: "But because of you the L-RD was angry with me and would not listen to me.'That is enough,' the L-RD said.'Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.'"

(2) 4:2: "No not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the L-RD your G-d in the way in which I gave them to you."

(3, 4) 7:8, 9: "But it was because the L-RD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the L-RD your G-d is G-d; he is the faithful G-d, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."

Haftarah: **Is. 40:1-26**

(5, 6) 40:9, 10: "You, who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You, who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up and do not be afraid; say to Judah, 'Here is your G-d!' See the Sovereign L-RD comes with power and his arm rules for him. See his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."

Brit Chadashah: **Mark 12:28-34 (L); Matt. 23:31-39(F)**

I have selected the second New Testament portion.

(7) Matt. 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under wings, and you were not willing."