

**Yitro (Jethro) Abundance Close Encounters in the Light**

Torah: **Ex. 18:1- 20:26**

Jethro's visit, call to commitment, giving of the Ten Words

**(1) 18:12** First ritual meal at the mountain lead by Jethro

**(2) 18:20** Teach the way Gen. 18:19 and Ps. 90:12

**(3) 19:5** If then equation, cause the whole earth is G-d's

**(4) 20:20** Do you realize He is real, and wants to be present among you?

Haftarah: **Is. 6:1-7:6; 9:5, 6**

Isaiah's theophany, commission, promise of restoration after captivity, two references to Messiah (7:7-16 removed a virgin shall give birth) and 9:5, 6 fivefold description of Immanuel

**(5) 6:13** a little pruning is in order

**(6) 9:5** G-d's human tabernacle, the child is Wonderful (**peleh**), Counsellor (**yo-atz**),

Mighty G-d (**ayl gibor**), everlasting Father (**avi ad**), Prince of Peace (**sar shalom**)

Brit Chadashah: **Matt. 5:8-20 (F) 5:17-32 (L)**

Last five beatitudes, calling to be catalyst, immutable law

**(7) 5:20** flawed righteousness unacceptable

Sermon: Rom. 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the POWER of G-d for the salvation of whoever believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

This is my last sermon in my series: Sharing the Light. I wanted to begin 2004 and get us ready for Passover and the summer by renewing our understanding of our purpose, our mandate. Today marks almost exactly one year since we regrouped as a community, and while the road has not always been without bumps and twists and turns, ***B'nai Chayim is developing into a dynamic Messianic Jewish congregation with a solid foundation and a clear purpose.***

Yeshua is that *foundation*, and His Word is our *purpose*. He is the light and we are called to share the light. How we share the light has been the subject we have been examining as we wander down the wintery Canadian road to Purim and Pesach –as we keep centered on His festivals, His purposes for one more year. Neither Pharaoh nor Amalek, nor any other creature can stop us (Rom. 8:37-39 a ten fold litany of failed opposition). Mishpocah, in Him we are unstoppable – serial Armies (you know: "I'll be back"). We're back and we are one more year closer to the Kingdom. So?

I am still sad and mad about the tsouris we were forced to endure, but not always for the reasons you would think. It sucks having to work six jobs and sometimes I get so tired, but such is life and I've gotten to do some pretty exciting things and have met some pretty weird and wonderful people ( I mean other than the crew I hand with on Shabbat). I am sad and mad because it was all so unnecessary, and G-d will not let me put it behind me until I am able to do so from His perspective. He is so stubborn with me.

When I get my nose out of joint, I eventually pray a stubborn prayer. Let me share it with you and then I want to speak of the shamelessness we need in the Gospel. When the bills pile up and my car breaks down and my shoes get holes in them, it takes me a while to recover my **extremely sunny disposition**, for which I am justly famous. And the most annoying inner battle ensues between my flesh and my spirit, and guess whose side G-d's Spirit takes? I want to be set free until I can honestly say: "show me how I should respond, and I will do it, even if it kills me, cause in the light of eternity, I want to dwell in the light of eternity" I usually add this little reminder too: "but about them alligators, did you have to put so many of them in the swamp I'm supposed to drain?" Then I feel better and am able to get on with His will in my life.

You see, believers are called to have the highest standards in a world where violence, deceit and passion set more traps for the human soul than the number of silly websites which pollute the internet. Daily and constantly we need to understand that we live on the edge of eternity and that one day soon, **His kingdom will explode into this sorry world and consume everything which is not worthy of our eternal attention**. Our biggest battle as believers, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, is what we are paying attention to and storing up in our hearts (that secret inner universe where the shadows lurk).

How can we share the light, when we are struggling to break free from darkness? I think I have just answered my own question. This is our dual purpose at B'nai Chayim, as we enter our second year. **We are to break free of darkness, especially the inner kind, and share the light**. This was Abraham's calling, Moses' calling and Yeshua is still calling, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. How are you responding to this calling?

Let me do a bit of review with you, before I take you through the verse which has been my theme for this whole series. My first sermon dealt with the activity of G-d in the lives of all the nations and generations of mankind. I called it: (1) **Redemptive analogies** and I talked about the fivefold witness we are a part of: [cosmos, conscience, culture, circumstance, canon]. He is active, persistent and constant.

In my next message, I spoke of the way G-d works in our lives to both bring us to Him and to use us to bring others to Him. I spoke of: (2) **divine appointments**, and the passage I used has haunted my steps for the 31 years I have been a believer [Phil. 2:13]. From there, I built on this activity of G-d and in my next offering, I spoke of our need to fill our lives with spiritual reality, so that people could see the positive effects of the message we proclaim. I spoke of: (3) **spiritual credibility**, and said when people see this kind of reality in the way we live our lives, ***they are brought closer to the kingdom we have already entered*** [Matt. 6:33].

Two weeks ago, I spoke about a form of sharing which I feel is extremely counter productive. I spoke about: (4) **intrusive proselytization**, or reducing the Gospel to a sales pitch and trying to sell it, instead of building the kind of community relationships which our faith requires, in order to be effective. I used verse like I Pe. 3:15 to speak of our need to earn the right to be heard.

Today I want to use Rom. 1:16 to speak of the power of this Gospel for salvation and the verses of the weekly Torah portion fit into what I want to say quite nicely. Rav Sh'aul knew he was nearing the end of his ministry and he was getting ready for his visit to the capital of the universe: Imperial Rome. He was under arrest and was waiting for a trial before a hostile ruler who might have him executed on a whim.

**He was not ashamed of his situation nor of his message.** Caesar neither impressed him nor really terrified him. What terrifies you? Pharaoh's power crumbled before G-d's purposes, and even though Israel was going to be slaughtered and taken captive, G-d told Isaiah that He would always preserve the righteous trunk. **There are no real disasters, nor setbacks in the Kingdom, as long as you walk in the light.** Yeshua said He came to fulfill the Word and reminds us of our duty to fulfill the **commandments**.

So, are you ashamed this morning about your situation? About our situation? Are you terrified, frustrated, bored, and impatient? **Or is the power of G-d for salvation in the Gospel, the power that powers your life responses to the bumps, the twists and the setbacks this old life throws at you?** If we ever let the things of this life distract us from our eternal perspective, we are really in trouble. If we understand that in the light of the Kingdom which is coming, only our responses to life matter, then we will keep bringing them back to G-d until we get it right, for this is the whole duty of man. Right?

I know the Gospel, and I am prepared to share what I believe with anyone who is prepared to discuss spiritual things seriously and calmly. Matt. 7:6 warns about dogs and swine who do not want to listen. Let G-d work on them. **Shine at them. Be salty.** It's not up to you to convince everyone, to fix everything, or to help everyone, like a *cosmic janitor looking for spiritual messes to sort out.*

It is up to us to shine and to be salty, even in Rome, in prison, and especially in every circumstance of our lives, because we believe the Gospel. Eternity is coming more swiftly and more certainly than tomorrow's sunrise, and more certainly than the spring we are all so eagerly waiting for. We need to keep our eternal perspective and only focus on the details of our lives so that we can respond with this same eternal perspective which shall one day judge us. The power of G-d to salvation crushed the opposition of Egypt and is relentlessly pursuing the lost souls of the children of Adam and Eve, from the cradle to the grave.

Missionsfest is upon us next week. Our first annual meeting is coming up in two weeks. In three weeks it's Purim again, and one month after that, it's Pesach. ***We are a happening community. Are you happening in the community?*** His power pulls us relentlessly back to a kingdom perspective, and everything else is just hay, wood and stubble. Our ministry is unique. Our community is unique. We are both children of life and children of light. We believe the Gospel. We have found the Messiah – actually the Messiah has found us. Like the rabble which swirled around in heap at the bottom of the mountain, now that the L-rd has our attention, His lets us know His intention for us.

Does He have your attention? What is His intention? I want to conclude with Yeshua's summary of that intention: Matt. 22:34-40. **Yeshua fulfilled the Word concerning Him and He wants to empower us to fulfill the commandments concerning us.** If this is what's happening in your life and in our life, then He is not ashamed of you or of us.

Next week: Shabbat Shekalim – time to fix things up for Purim, Pesach and Shavuot. May the power of G-d to salvation, which you believe, empower your life, and our life as we enter our second year, cause mishpocah, we ain't seen nothing yet. The trunk (the stump) will always remain standing and His kingdom will fill the whole world. May it always fill our heart and our community. Amen.