

Yitro **Abundance****Torah:** Exodus 18:1-20:26**Haftarah:** Is. 6:1-7:7; 9:6, 7**Brit Chadashah:** Matt. 5:8-20

We will do the blessings and have the portion Ex. 20:1-17 read in Hebrew from the scroll (Aaron) and in English (John). This will be followed by a brief explanation of the centrality of the Ten Commandments in a biblical understanding of the Law (the ten versus the 613) and of tradition.

Psalm 19 **The Ten Commandments** **Jewish Hero: Aaron Shaw**

One of the functions of our mission statement deals with being a repair shop and I would like to deal with two related aspects of healing or repair which our community wishes to engage in. We want to be able to help people recover both from *inner (spiritual) brokenness* and from *infected spirituality*. I would first like to describe what inner brokenness looks like and also discuss what I mean by an infected spirituality. I want to then proceed to suggest ways of dealing with both of these conditions and I want to conclude with a description of spiritual wholeness which allows people the time to recover and to grow out of both of these disabilities.

Spiritual brokenness refers to a spiritual or emotional state where experiences have damaged a person's ability to function and they experience pain or anger or want to retreat whenever their damage is *triggered* and this is not always as easy to spot as a physical injury. They may be the victim a variety of emotional and physical abuses and want to have nothing more to do with the contexts which damaged them.

Rather than go into a lengthy discussion of all the different kinds of brokenness, let me make a few comments which relate to our discussion. *Many psychological problems are spiritual problems* and people from abusive homes or from abusive marriages and even from abusive congregations carry inner damage which means that in certain situations they are not actually relating to that situation, but *respond through the damage* and until the damage is healed, there are certain situations which they cannot handle effectively and someone who is usually happy or well balanced suddenly adopts behaviours which take us by surprise and we may feel like we are suddenly dealing with a different person (Dr. Jeckel and not Mr. Hyde).

Heb. 12:13 and 2 Cor. 1:3, 4 talk about *wounding* and *comfort* and the only effective way to deal with hurting people who have experienced brokenness is to help them to heal and sometimes that takes time and prayer. In the process, we need to be able to help them to see that how they respond is based on an attitude or an idea which they have learned defensively and the *roaring lion* or the *cringing mouse* and the *retreating puppy* are not ways we want people to respond when they encounter triggers in our midst.

So instead of recoiling in horror and landing on them with two feet or preaching them into oblivion – or allowing them to roar, cringe or run on a regular basis, we want to let them know we understand that *brokenness can be healed* as you identify both the damage and brokenness response and guide them into removing the pain and the hurt and the fear (and the anger and all the other works of the flesh) until three surprising realities set in.

The first is **realizing**, the next is **forgiving** and the third is learning to **walk straight** (and not continuing to stumble and limp). Now before I go into these three in detail, let me deal with infected spirituality and to define it will be easier than it looks.

Infected spirituality (2 Cor. 7:1) is where ***the works of the flesh are seen as valid responses to the situations and circumstances of our lives*** (Gal. 5:19-21, 1 Cor. 6:9-11), instead of as part of the damage we both want to recover from and as the infection we want to be released from.

Now, anger has its place (Eph. 4:26), when we encounter danger or injustice, but it should be a corrective police action which attempts to both protect and restore righteousness and never to justify violence.

We do not want to expand the **damage** or to take **vengeance**, as much as we want to fit the punishment to the crime and teach righteousness and not declare war until we have either destroyed our foe or are destroyed by our foe (Gal. 5:13-15) – ***there is no room for holy wars in the Gospel of the Torah.***

Infected spirituality justifies sin as an appropriate response and sets up the works of the flesh as the desired end product or solution to a conflict or to a problem.

Murder, theft, sexual immorality, slander, or oppression/repression should never be allowed to be the objectives we are working to accomplish, but should always be seen as part of the problems we are trying to solve and as part of the damage we are trying to heal. Lust, (negative) anger (which I shall call wrath, but should never be confused with the wrath and anger of G-d – Ex. 34:5-7), fear, hatred and pain have guided human behaviour in our world too long and should have no place in a congregation dedicated to biblical spirituality and to tikkun olam – both in our own worlds and in the world at large.

I am glad I am talking about this on a Shabbat where we have studied the Ten Commandments, because both ***spiritual brokenness*** and ***infected spirituality*** want to build a life in opposition to the Ten and either to perpetrate a nightmare or spend a lifetime running away from it instead of confronting it and removing its influence from our midst as we gather together to celebrate the truth and to recover from all the pain and the infections of this life.

Now onto my threefold solution scenario: realizing, forgiving and walking straight, since they apply to both conditions. In my experience, some people are not aware that how they think and how they react is both not acceptable and not the natural or usual response.

One of the features of how the Bible and Jewish people have viewed humanity is that ***evil is not the natural condition of the human soul, but is an acquired perversion of the image of G-d we were all created to bear*** and to explore, and there are nine aspects of how this image is to function and respond to the situations of life which we encounter (Gal. 5:22 – love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control).

Any attitude or habit which contradicts these imperatives or which is not found among this group is either part of brokenness or a spiritual infection which we must be healed from. When we realize that any attitude or habit or response or thought (2 Cor. 10:3-5) which rises up in rebellion to our obedience to the Ten,

needs to be revealed for what it is and dealt with – **because while we are always called to hate the sin, we are never called to hate the sinner** – which brings me to my next point: forgiveness.

Forgiveness sets us free from the influence of sin and stops the pain from growing or festering or continuing to cause us damage and it must be at least two pronged. We must always seek for forgiveness and we must always extend forgiveness – because if we ever cease forgiving, we have stopped being forgiven.

Now forgiveness **does not mean we accept the unforgiveable** or that we say that it is alright for people to keep on hurting, cheating and stealing from us. **It means that we do not use wrong behaviour as the basis for our behaviour** - and that we base our behaviour on the principles of the Word of G-d and do not allow the situation to tell us what is right and what is wrong.

It also doesn't mean that the person we have forgiven (or who has forgiven us) is once again in our good books or is allowed access to our lives because respect is given, trust is earned. **I would never shoot an abortionist or murder a Nazi or even beat up a terrorist, because two wrongs never make a right** and when I forgive a perpetrator, my forgiveness does not necessarily have any impact on them or on their future conduct (future attitudes and habits either), but it does have a considerable impact on my conduct (and my attitudes and habits).

I will never treat people the way they treat me, unless this way is an expression of the Ten or the fruit of the spirit and I will also take protective steps to make sure that my conduct is not dictated by the unrighteousness I am being bombarded with – but is only guided by the Word.

So, I will turn the other cheek and not take the law into my own hands and I will lock my doors and defend myself and my family, so I can join the fight against crime and unrighteousness **and not become part of it**. I do not have to like the people I forgive, nor give them access to my life – forgiveness protects me and my life from their influence and moves me from reacting to pro-acting – **from being obliged to react according to the rules of their game instead of being set free to react according to the rules of G-d's game**.

Forgiveness is both a defensive and an offensive manoeuvre and it allows the healing of brokenness to begin and for the infection of carnal spirituality to be removed, which leads me to my third point and to our conclusion – straight paths.

You all know that I suffer from an allergy condition called **multiple chemical sensitivity** (MCS), and that I am on the road to being healed as I get better and better (though not younger and younger). Part of this process means **avoiding** scent, and recovering from scent exposures as well as **repairing** the damage which scent has afflicted my body with – in other words, **removing** what should not be there and **adding** what should be there.

I am pulling out of a dark decade of sickness by placing straight paths before my feet – paths which both provide healing and which also help me deal with setbacks and slip ups **whenever the dastardly forces of noxious chemical compounds pounce on me unexpectedly and throw me into massive allergic reactions** which I am getting better at handling as I take four steps forwards and slip two or three backwards!

How are you handling your brokenness? How are we handling the spiritually broken people in our midst? How are we handling the spiritual infections which try and ruin our spiritual responses? How are we handling the spiritual infections which want to take up residence in our midst?

We need to be guiding people through these three steps until they are able to be on the path to recovery and are no longer ***languishing*** on the path of downward spiraling which defines our secular world.

We need to help them to see that they are broken and infected when how they live and respond is not in according to the imperatives of G-d's Word, but is either a response of brokenness or one of infection. This will not always be easy or possible with a single contact or conversation. Some of us are more stubborn than cows when the barn is burning and are like monkeys holding on to the pebble with all our might – and ***some of us want to get even more than we want to get well*** (or are determined to run away and keep running because we are so terrified or tired and are convinced that nothing will ever change or get better).

Unless we realize that we have a problem we will never get better – and part of that is to understand ***what constitutes a spiritual problem*** – what constitutes spiritual brokenness and a spiritual infection – be it ever so ***minor or temporary or major and endemic***. The ravages of the flesh in the sheepfold will always do more damage than the attacks of the world or the enemy.

Next we must show people the importance of dynamic forgiveness which disconnects us from the damage which will both want to hurt us and hypnotise us into carnal reactions and pull our house off the rock onto the sand ***so that we end up in the biting and devouring trap and self destruct before we have a chance to overcome the enemy.***

If we are not prepared to forgive, we are not prepared to be forgiven and we have to understand what that means. It is not an admission of weakness or of resignation – it is taking back our emotional and spiritual integrity and placing all our hearts and lives under the protection of obedience to His Word so that we do not encounter any ***substantial spiritual damage***.

Victory will not always be easy or automatic and it is often a journey along a straight path which eventually straightens out our hearts and our feet and B'nai Chayim will always be a place of ***straight paths***. We want healing, whether it is being healed of all and any brokenness or also includes being healed of all and any spiritual infection which tries to set up shop in our midst.

Are you dealing with spiritual brokenness? Are you fighting off any spiritual infections?

A life based on applying the Ten to every situation will not only heal and cleanse, it will enrich and grow in grace and knowledge as we allow our faithful obedience to help us to heal, and to grow until our path towards our Father's home in glory is straight and narrow and is also our greatest testimony.

May we all be set free from the ***noxious fumes of this sinful age*** as we avoid being exposed to its disgusting odors and may we learn to do whatever it takes to recover from any such episodes whenever we encounter them!

We will take regain lost territory and get back on schedule in building our ***personal and corporate house of praise***, because this is both our destiny and our calling – whether we have it easy or bumpy. May our

lives always be guided by His objectives and be focused on implementing them both by obedience and by healing – to live any other way is a waste of time and energy. Neither brokenness nor infection are His will for us.

Let's pray.