

2 Adar m5772 (25/2/12) *Community: Our Corporate Spiritual Identity* J. M.

Terrett

Mature Fellowship: Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 3:14-17; I Thess. 4:9-12

Terumah Offerings A Suitable Meeting Place

Torah: Ex. 25:1-27:19

(1) 25:22. It is there I will meet you from the top of the ark (between the wings of the cherubim – still not able to be seen)

(2) 26:6. So that the tabernacle shall be one whole (echad) (Tent too – 26:11, but hooks of bronze for roof-why, more solid)

(3) 26:11 curtain around the holy place of linen, roof of dyed ram's skin (incarnation reference?), the covering of *tachash* (clean animal, antelope), not a badger or a dolphin or any other unclean animal.

(4) 27:1 acacia wood covered with brass. Vs.4 a solid brass grill (where wood and offerings would hang down half way into the square altar. 27:8 the altar shall be hollow, bronze covered wood – why? Solid bronze (metal) would be too heavy to carry

Haftarah: I Kings 5:12-6:13

(5) 6:7 no hammer or axe or iron instrument used on site – only finished pre-fitting materials of stone and wood (covered in gold)

(6) 6:13 I will dwell in the midst and not abandon

Brit Chadashah: 2 Cor. 9:1-15

(7) 9:7 offerings must be made without bitterness or obligation

Ps. 26 Jewish hero: Pastor Steve

Eph. 4:11-16: "He has given some to be apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists and others as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for ministry, for building up the body of Messiah, until we have all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of G-d, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Messiah and so that we would no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine and people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love, we should grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into the Messiah, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together, by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

(Col. 3:12-17; I Thess. 4:9-12)

Mature fellowship is a **stage of growth** which both takes **times** to reach and which requires **considerable maintenance**. It first requires a hefty degree of mutual self knowledge – that we know each other's measure (what we are capable of and what we are not capable of) – and where we do not become convinced that our weaknesses the weakest link in the chain – but **that a knowledge of them allows us to strengthen the chain by not using them to pull us apart**.

It next requires a **common, shared experience of working together** (problem solving, ark and tabernacle building) where we have become an **effective team, each contributing separately to the common whole**. Where we have found our place together and fill that place together.

Lastly, it requires maintenance, where we do not allow ourselves to **grow apart or grow rusty** – and where we do not allow things to come between us (the unresolved issues which tear families apart and which scatter communities and break up teams).

Let me first talk about **mutual self knowledge**, and liken it to a new car or to a new pair of shoes or even to a new house. **You have to get to know something before you really know how it works** and are comfortable with the job that it does and neither expect more nor less from it. Once you know something's measure than you will not place yourself and it in a situation it cannot handle and for which it is not made.

It can be like that with members of a team or members of a community. We are all **unique individuals** and we have to learn who we are and who we are not and find a way to work together and not to put each other in situations we cannot handle – said another way, know which people in our midst are suited for which situations, **because I do not feel G-d will put us in situations we cannot handle, without giving us the people to handle them.**

As we grow, it is exciting to welcome new people and interesting to get to them and their stories. It is even more exciting to watch them **find their place** among us and to **help us do things we could not do as well without them.** It can be bumpy and it can be messy as we figure each other out, but I would like to say it another way – **it will always be bumpy and messy until we learn to figure each other out.**

All of us are gifted and all of us have limits and mature fellowship is where we learn to recognize both of these facets of who we are and allow them to become the links that join us together. One of the beauties of the festival cycle is that it is like any sport – it has its **pre-season**, its **season** and its **playoffs** and even its **postseason.** Every year we build up to **Passover**, rest until the **High Holy Days**, then glide through **Chanukah** as we build back up through **Purim** to another **Passover.**

This schedule of congregational life events will not vary and each new member adds a **flavour** and brings a **contribution** that may not be fully mature in one or even two turns through the festival cycle, but **as we find our place together, our game gets better and we are able to make each new season special and meaningful.**

The same is also true when people leave our midst and we have to reform the team without them, but every now and then, they come back from New Zealand for a visit. We need to learn to let people go and pray that they will be **replaced** in our midst and that they will be a **blessing** in which ever new midst they move into.

The saddest scenario with this level of maturing fellowship is that there are believers who do not find their **place in any midst** and they just **drift along** or **opt out** (keep on migrating or just quietly warm a pew and not let anyone get to know them).

It is my prayer that we remain a shul of **maturing fellowship** where every **new team member** finds their place as we cycle through the seasons of the L-rd, so that they job we do will bring **glory** to His name and growth and **maturity** to each of us in all aspects of our game (pre-season, season, playoffs and post-season).

Lastly, I would like to talk briefly about the ***maintenance*** which mature, season oriented fellowship needs. With many pro athletes and other gifted people, it is not the ***tensions of their careers*** which cause them to flounder, but the ***circumstances of their personal lives*** which lose their ***focus*** and their ***balance***.

You will often hear me say that we are all on the same pilgrimage from the ***cradle to the grave*** and our successful arrival into our Father's home in glory will depend, ***not on any one situation*** or any ***set of circumstances*** which we encounter along the way.

It will always depend on how we relate to them – and on how we are able to keep things balanced in our ***personal lives*** and especially in our ***community involvement***. This involvement will vary according to both our ***giftedness*** and to our ***willingness*** (ability) to be become involved. ***Our giftedness will not change much – it may mature as we allow it to develop though.***

Our willingness and our ability to be involved may change according to what is happening in our lives, ***but our involvement in our community should never lapse or be allowed to be put on hold***, even if all we are able to do for a season is to ***show up for worship, prayer, study and fellowship***. Sometimes all we can do is show up when there is a lot going on in our lives and the amount we are able to contribute, may also have its ups and downs (***cause sometimes our finances are great and at other times, they become a little thin***).

However, ***we are never called to face this life alone***, without a community and ***as we weave our lives into the festival cycle*** (preseason, season, play offs and post season), ***along with all the events and passages we encounter along the way, we will learn to pull together and not drift apart*** – and not find ourselves isolated and alone when we are cold or when we fall.

We need to learn to face the events of our lives with a ***mature togetherness***, where people who know us can help us through the whatever's which we encounter over the festival year and where we can learn to both ***discover*** and ***maximize*** our giftedness and also where we can learn to discover and maximize the ***place in the community*** which our giftedness equips us for. In the process of discovering our giftedness and our place in the community, two sets of occurrences will decide whether our fellowship matures, or whether it dwindles and ***we live in the kind of spiritual, community isolation which the L-rd never intends for us to endure.***

The first set of these occurrences are stable and regular and I am referring to the various ***celebrations of festival cycle***. As we participate and contribute towards the smooth running of another season (preseason, season, playoffs and off season), our life will focus on the ***spiritual priorities*** we are called to live by and together we will find the ***focus*** and the ***strength*** to carry on through the next set of occurrences and these are less predictable: ***the glorious and inglorious happenstances of life***

Seven months ago our ***basement*** flooded. Several of us have had to deal with ***deaths*** in the family, others with ***births, marriages, new jobs*** (and unemployment), ***good health, sickness, car trouble***, and all the other milestones which we have to ***mark, survive and continue on past*** if we are to not become sidetracked or stalled in our pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave, both as ***individuals*** and as a ***community***.

When we become stalled or sidetracked, we need help to get going again and to come back on track and ***that is where our involvement in a spiritual community comes in***, and to the measure we have learned

or are learning about **mature fellowship**, our journey will be help along as we help others along, **because we will all take turns needing some “TLC”. and the occasional swift kick (wake up call).**

How is your journey doing?

How is your fellowship doing?

Are you getting plugged into the life of our team and helping us through our preseason, our season our playoffs and our post season?

To help you out, let me define our season one more time – the **spring festivals**, the **fall festivals**, the **winter two (Chanukah and Purim)** and the summer **off season**, with our **vacations** and our **congregational picnic(s)**.

Are you plugging in your giftedness into our seasons?

Are you letting the festivals of the L-rd define the direction and the purpose of your life, through all the happy and sad happenstances you are encountering along the way as you cycle through the festivals with us?

Things come and things go, but **we are always called to be plugged into the festival cycle and into a community whose life revolves around them**, from the **cradle to the grave**, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, to little kids and young people, to the growing family and to the aging seniors in our midst.

There is always a place, there is always a task and there is always strength to give and strength to take – a contribution to make and a contribution to receive.

May each of us and all of us discover our giftedness and find the place where this can be used and may we use it throughout the other whatever’s which we encounter as we flow through the annual festival cycle and as we learn to move together as a well oiled community, **enjoying each other during our preseasons, our seasons our playoffs and our postseasons.**

Purim is our current season and it is a little fun and frolic before our season really winds up and takes us into Passover and into the playoffs (actual Seder meal).

Shul attendance and regular contributions (of what comes in, be it ever so much or ever so little) keeps the life lines open so that we can be there for each other when it is our turn to grieve, to rejoice, to move, to graduate or to do **anything and everything** with a **mature togetherness** that we need to fight as hard to maintain as we do with any of the other essentials of lives, both those spiritual and those business of living tasks we all have to fulfill and whose needs we have to meet along the way.

May your preseasons be blessed.

May your seasons be blessed.

May your playoffs be blessed and may your off seasons be blessed as you mature into our togetherness and give and take the strength we all need to arrive together and whole to our Fathers' home in glory.

Next week: Generational fellowship. Let's pray.