

23 Tevet, 5767 (Jan. 13, 2007) *B'nai Chayim Our Celebratory Function: The Bride and The Repair Shop* J. M. Terrett

SHEMOT	NAMES
TORAH:	Ex. 1:1-6:1
HAFTARAH:	Is. 27:6-28:13; 29:22, 23
BRIT CHADASHAH:	Rev. 16:1-21

As we prepare to bid farewell to another spectacular Canadian winter, I would like to continue to teach on our congregational vision statement. Our first two elements, the **(1) Light House** and the **(2) Tree** represent our **prophetic function** and we spent the first part of the winter examining how both our world view and our lifestyle stand in increasing opposition to the **secular society** we dwell among, but are never really part of. The second two elements, **(3) the Bride** and the **(4) Repair Shop** represent our **celebratory function** and we shall spend the later part of the winter examining how our worldview and our lifestyle flow from an increasing attachment to the **heavenly destiny** where our spirits actually dwell and which we are actually a part of.

When we talk about our **celebratory function** we are actually dealing with **two** aspects of our joy mandate – our celebration of His **invisible presence** in our midst and our celebration of His **tangible activity** in our lives. We know that His presence is not physical, but spiritual and our senses respond to this reality when our spirit allows His Spirit to flow through us, both individually and corporately. We know that His activity on our behalf, both corporately and personally brings us a **measurable dividend** – our perspective is constantly renewed and our needs are constantly provided for.

There are three aspects of His meeting of our needs which I wish to highlight this morning. Throughout this part of the series, I will be variably referring to the worship aspect of our celebratory component, so here is the first instalment, before we speak briefly of the meeting of our needs. Worship is a hands on (or hands up) learning experience where we learn by doing and it is a very **durable, intricate** process we exercise congregationally at least once a week.

I have no illusions about the interplay between our individual **attention spans** (and our variant **learning styles**) and how much the business of living has left us able to enter in and maintain participation in the **ebb and flow** of the musical worship we experience each week. Some times, some of us are on the moon, sometimes some of us are deep in His presence and sometimes the **fearsome foursome** interact to drag us down and out of His presence, you know: **fatigue, worry, hunger and distractions**. Musical worship is a discipline of relaxation and concentration where we learn to hit more than we miss. It is often a similar process of interaction during the preaching of the Word.

So for those of you who are listening and for those of you who are **zoning in and out**, let me deal with three aspects of bridal celebration which are ours for the taking. You know, brides are funny creatures. Besides the desire to spend money at the speed of light, they are both incredibly joyful to the point of being **goofy** and incredibly focused on **minor details** which most people would need a high powered microscope to notice. As we grow in our love and devotion to the L-rd who is coming back one day to take us into the **bridal chamber of His eternal joy**, we may get even goofier and more focused than a whole room full of brides. However, our focus has two distinct sides; one **heavenly** and one **earthly** and they work together.

I find ladies more confusing than they find me. They always want to know that you love them and that you find them beautiful, interesting and that they are the most important person in your life. You can't just tell them once, or even once in a while, they are like **ravenous emotional vampires**, forever hungry and **extremely** dangerous when they are not fed. And all the men said: oy gaval!

In many respects we are like this during our sojourn on earth. We are often so uncertain about the L-rd's love and acceptance that we require His constant **attention** and **assurance**. This is

not a bad thing, but it is part of the growing intimacy between the Lord and His community of fiancés who are spending their time getting ready for our **big day**. How can we get ready and not lose our **heavenly bridal focus**? Besides a regular dose of musical worship and of personal prayer (along with lots of Bible Study, fellowship and sharing), we are called to perform **three** duties to help us deal with our impatience, so we can be driven by goofiness and not by fear or distraction.

First of all, we need to remind ourselves constantly that our lives are truly driven by the **timing of G-d**. In a very real sense which defies adequate description, He responds to our free will and to all the baggage of the particular: "to the third and fourth generation" context we are living in and uses all the details of our lives for our good and for the accomplishment of His purposes in and through us. How He does it and why He does it the way He does it are not something I think we can really get a handle on in this life, and I am not sure that such an endeavour would be profitable because the answer you get might not help you to respond to life with the faith and hope which a bride needs.

Instead of resentment, envy or gloating, we need to see that G-d is at work in all the intimate details of our lives as if our story were the only thing that mattered in the universe. As such, we are never abandoned, forsaken, cornered or permanently victimized by anything or everything which our lives encounter on our pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Instead of fear, dread and frustration when we don't get our own way, we need to see that, in His timing it is His ways which we are to access and follow, **whether we like the weather in our lives or not**.

Now I am not saying that we should passively accept everything with a kind of pessimistic or optimistic fatalism and not make plans to change or improve the situations of our lives. What we need to see is that G-d is actively involved in our lives, even before we are aware of Him and over and above our ability to fathom. What we are called to do is to call upon Him, and to seek to respond to every circumstance of our lives with a **constantly renewed spiritual understanding** of His **eternal purposes** in our lives and their very **precise requirements** – otherwise known as the **Ten Commandments**. It may take us time to come to terms with our spiritual duty in every area of our lives, but it is this process of coming to terms which is the second bridal duty which our faith requires us to perform.

We need to make peace in all the storms and all the seasons of our lives. **First** we need to make peace with Him and then with as **many** of the people and the circumstances of our lives as are receptive to this healing function. We know that part of the joy of His coming will involve a very definite Judgment Day and that all the **unfinished business** of our lives will be finished, either to our **advantage** or to our **loss**. **How much peace we make with our lot in life will determine how much reward or how much loss we harvest as we pass through His cleansing fire to our eternal bliss.** Romans 12:18 places a perspective on this peace I want to touch on, before I move onto the last of the bridal duties we will deal with this morning – as much as lies within us.

Some people do not want to make peace and some situations are not sufficiently under our control for us to bring peace to them. And here I am talking about a very fearsome Shakespearean trio: **friends, family** and the **slings and arrows of outrageous fortune**. We do not have to feel good about all the details of our lives and we will not move on from acquired happiness to even greater happiness as we bring life's challenges to the cross of our Messiah. However, **peace with Him is possible in every situation and relationship of our lives** and it is this **peace making process** which is our greatest spiritual duty to perform, again and again, daily and constantly – even persistently, while we wait for His glorious, eternal kingdom to be established over all the generations and nations of mankind.

While we struggle to recognize His timing in our lives and, like Jacob, as we wrestle with the storms of our lives until we have peace, we need to learn to recognize that **we limp because of Him and not because of the damage which life may have inflicted on our souls.**

In literature we talk about one aspect of theme which is one of the most realistic features of how people live their lives as they go from one disaster of their own making to the next situation which

they will also make a mess of: most people stumble through life with one or more **fatal character flaws**. Too many of us are extremely adept at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory and seem to spend far too long wallowing in disasters of our own making.

As the bride of the Lamb, we need to understand that no flaw in our character needs to be fatal, and that every weakness we possess can be a **redemptive flaw**, which G-d will use to our good and to the accomplishment of His purposes if we see them as thorns where His power is made perfect **because** of our weaknesses, **not in spite of them**. Now this feature of our bridal duty may be easily misunderstood. We are not called to indulge our weaknesses; **we are called to grow in our ability to let Him use them to His glory in our lives**.

This is where the body of Messiah comes in and where some fairly firm, deep **redemptive self talk** is needed. We are called to help each other out, by using our **strengths** for the general good and allowing the general good compensate for our **weaknesses** – sort of like the positive and negative **muscular tension** which enables our bodies to function and to move. However, there is a level of personal responsibility which I struggle with and which has a **greater potential** impact on the spiritual progress of our lives than any trauma we may encounter, no matter how painful or intense. **I am purposely flawed by His grace** and I do not need to go through life living like **damaged goods**, just because there are many situations in which my own foolishness trips me up again and again, without any sign of getting any better.

Even in our folly and our failure, there is a way of escape, where straight paths can be followed, no matter how many times our severe limp causes us to repeatedly stumble and fall. Both Judas Iscariot and Peter had rather **severe fatal flaws** in their character and I can relate to both of them. **Peter** was so **impulsive** that he spent more time hopping than walking, cause one foot was always in his mouth. **Judas** was more of a **control freak** who liked to be in control of things and could not handle uncertainty.

Peter never overcame his fatal flaw, but allowed the L-rd to use it redemptively, because even a **big mouth** can be useful in G-d's purposes. Judas never overcame his flaw and when he lost control and could not get it back, he took his own life, **instead of surrendering to G-d's redemptive control**. His betrayal was a necessary as Peter's triple denial.

Now, as I bring my message to a close, let me ask you about your **flaws** and give you the **good news** and the **bad news**, but I am going to start with the bad news. There are character flaws which each of us possess which will **never** go away, nor ever get any better, no matter how hard we try and no matter how many self-help seminars we attend. The good news is that all of our flaws can become **redemptive** when we surrender our weaknesses to Him and cling to the first two bridal duties I mentioned this morning. First of all, we need to realize that G-d is in **final control** of all the details of our lives and we need to surrender to His **timing** and His **sovereignty**. Then we need bring **peace** to all of the details and events of our lives – and this includes accepting our flaws and living at peace with our **inabilities** as much as we do with our **abilities**.

There is a considerable amount of teaching I could do about these three duties, and I will expand further on these aspects of our spiritual life as we go through the series on our celebratory function. However, if you want to deal more with specifics, come to Yeshiva and we will go deeper and longer than time permits on a Sabbath morning.

Mishpocah, how well are you doing your **bridal duty** in our beloved Messiah? Are you trusting in His **timing** or are you working on your own agenda? Are you making **peace** with your life or are you still fighting battles you can't win? Finally, are you letting Him turn your **flaws** from fatal into redemptive, so your life does not **serially self destruct** on your way home to our Eternal reward?

Let's pray.