

19 Tevet, 5772 (Jan. 14, 2012) *Community: Our Corporate Spiritual Identity* J. M. Terrett
We Are Our Brother's Keeper

Shemot Names: The Immoveable object succumbs to the Irresistible force

Torah: Exodus 1:1-6:1

(1) 1:12: But the more they oppressed the children of Israel, the more they multiplied and grew in number and so the Egyptians came to dread the children of Israel.

(2) 3:12: G-d said: I will be with you; and this shall be a sign for you that it is I who send you: when you shall have made the people to come out of Egypt, you (and they) shall serve G-d upon this mountain.

(3) 4:31: The people believed. They learned that the L-rd had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their suffering and they bowed down and prostrated themselves (before the L-RD).

(4) 6:1: The L-RD said to Moses: you shall see now what I will do to Pharaoh; a powerful hand will force him to let them go a powerful hand will force him to chase them from his country.

Haftarah: Is. 27:6-28:12; 29:22, 23; Jer. 1:1-2:3

(5) 28:9: To whom does one wish to instruct wisdom? To whom does one wish to give lessons? Is it to children who have just been weaned, who have just been taken from the breast?

(6) 28:10: For it must be line upon line, line upon line; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a little here and a little there.

Brit Chadashah: I Cor. 14:13-25

(7) 14:20: Brethren, do not be children when it comes to judgment, but as for wickedness, be children; but as for judgment, be grown men.,

Ps. 99

I have often said that the greatest **barrier** to the progress of the Gospel worldwide is the way believers have **misbehaved** and the way they continue to do so. The temptation would be to become so discouraged and so fed up that, we either decide to have **nothing** further to do with other believers, or to adopt a **hypercritical** stance where we tell everybody who will listen what is wrong with all the other believers we know.

Neither option is biblical nor do they provide us with a viable solution in the face of the Clint Eastwood syndrome – you know: **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**. If we really wanted to understand how silly and how bad believers can get, there are numerous examples in the Bible, **to the Jew first and also to the Gentile**.

What do we do in the face of this reality and in the face of this information? I want to always adopt an approach which reflects the **bigger picture** and which also reflects my commitment to move as far as I can from the **permissive** will G-d to His **perfect** will in my own life – and in the life of our congregation.

Two passages, before I give you what you have all been waiting for: my three points [☺]

I Tim. 5:22 says that we should not place people in positions of leadership before they are ready (do not lay hands on any man suddenly does not mean we should not sneak up on them and scare them) AND also that we should not participate in the sins of others – our job is to keep our own nose clean – because we shall not be judged for the **actions** of others, but we shall certainly be judged on our own **actions** and on our own **reactions**, which leads me to the next passage.

2 Tim. 2:24-26 says that a servant of the Lord should not quarrel but be gentle unto all (even the difficult ones – you know, the ones who are worse than us), **patient**, willing to teach as we wait for God to give them repentance so that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, being taken captive by him to do his will. In other words, we must avoid being **pulled into their error** by our unwise and unwanted attempts to correct their folly.

People often ask me my opinion on evangelists and on ministries and I like Billy Graham's attitude – **he publically said that he did not publically comment on other ministries**. I think it is wiser to follow suit and to say rather **what we feel would be the characteristics of a good ministry** and then let the person see for themselves. In private is another thing and before I comment, I always want to know the person and what they are going to do with this information.

I have sometimes used a verse with humour – **Gal. 4:16** (have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth), but there is **too much truth there and too little humour**. I have sometimes wept with rage at the folly of believers who twist the truth for their own profit and bring shame on us all, but **that is their problem, not mine, nor God's – nor even the Gospel's unless I get pulled into their folly**.

I would far rather realize three truths and spend my time building our house on the **solid rock of listening** to His Word and **putting it into practice**, because I do not want to build in vain, nor stand guard in vain – God has always and will always build His house and watch over His city (**the generational community which will always be our corporate identity**).

So the first thing His word says to do is **not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together**, but to encourage one another daily, so that no one is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin – and especially as we see His day approaching (Heb. 10:24, 25 and 3:12, 13). God will either make sure that we are able to find like minded, sincere, **non bitter brethren** with whom we can share, be fed and experience **authentic spiritual growth** with – or He will give us grace to wait patiently alone for awhile until He can arrange for such lovely people to come across our path (**because there are others who need us as much as we need them**).

As for the rest: **PBPWMGINFWMY** (please be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet). **I always want to give my first and my best energy to what God is doing in my life and what he wants me to be doing** - what everybody else is up to needs to be low enough on the totem pole to only get the energy it deserves, which is never very much if any – and which brings me to my next passage.

Ecc. 4:9-12 talks about the need we have for other members of the flock, so we are not **cold** and are not **alone** when we fall – and so that we form a **knot** which is not easily broken (and that does not easily come unravelling). As an immigrant from a very dysfunctional home, who attended an even more dysfunctional set of schools in some of the strangest neighbourhoods on the planet, I have never been able to rely on an **extended family** for support – and I have moved around so much that there have always been too many people coming and going in my life (sigh – and it ain't over yet).

My prayer has always been that God would always surround me with good friends and that He would protect me from those who would want to harm me or my family in any way. I can say with much confidence that this prayer has always been answered – eventually.

We have had a ministry of reaching out to **broken people** and to the **knuckle brained, troublemakers** who try to blame their foolishness on a supposed brokenness they spend their lives causing, rather than experiencing (don't forget the family I was raised in – they taught me how).

I have been **mauled, roared at, betrayed, accused** and even **pursued, but I have never been forsaken, abandoned or left out in the cold by the L-rd or by the good people He has also brought across our path – eventually.** We walk by faith and live by hope and are commanded to love and forgive and I will always want to learn to be a **good community member**, even with all my many limitations – and to accord the same privilege to the others it is my privilege to walk through the vale of this life with, as we journey together from the cradle to the grave.

Moses, David and Paul all had good friends and were more than able to endure and to survive the others, because despite their obvious giftedness, **they could not have done what they did without the help of friends** – and that is what I want the testimony of this shul to be. Never alone, never abandoned, always cherished, always encouraged, with the occasional slap upside the head (the Gibbs/Denosso syndrome), which leads me to my final point and to the conclusion.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts there will be people who it is impossible to get along with and with whom we must both take **protective measures** and use **evasive manoeuvres**, which is what Rom. 12:18 says (as much as depends on you, be at peace with all men).

During the next seven weeks, I am going to be talking about **seven kinds of fellowship** as we continue to explore how to get the most out of our generational, corporate spiritual identity, but I do not want to leave you with the mistaken impression that good fellowship is always possible, because sometimes it is not.

As much as depends on us is the limit and the rest needs to be damage control and as I conclude, I want to talk to you about **three kinds of damage control**. We need to avoid **the damage that can come from arguing** when discussion is not possible and learning to walk away or to shut things down is not always easy and sometimes unfortunate encounters are part of the business of living we need to learn to handle.

The next kind of damage we need to avoid is the bitterness trap, where we argue with people in our hearts even after we no longer let them be part of our lives – just like we are stuck in an **anger, sadness, bitterness rut** and can't let go or move on and we become a country and western nightmare (nobody knows the trouble I've seen, but let me tell you all about it in detail and repeatedly, cause they were so bad I just have to tell you how bad until your ears are worn out and you avoid me because that's all I can talk about).

Ask me about the **holocaust**, and if there is time I will fill your ears, not just with the ugly stuff, but with some of the greatest heroic stories in human history as we talk about some of the most amazing stories of **survival** and **recovery** ever to grace this miserable planet – but there are lots of other things to talk about and please get me started about my children and my grandchildren.

I want to sing my sad song until I am healed and until it is about this healing and the wisdom it brings. This is what I want to focus on, cause undigested food and undercooked meals don't to anybody any good, except to give us heartburn and gas.

I want to get over it and I want to quit falling for it again. Sometimes we need to learn to say: get me once, shame on you, get me twice, shame on me, which leads me to my final kind of damage and that is the failure to believe that people can actually change and grow up.

As a young believer, I once attended a church which had a whole display case full of tracts against almost every other group but theirs and against every other translation of the Bible but the King James. They were friendly and nice, but boy, ***could they point out what was wrong with everybody else and not believe that anybody could learn from their mistakes or change. This is the kind of false damage control I want to learn to avoid.***

When the Worldwide Church of G-d admitted that their doctrine was wrong and rejoined the mainstream of evangelical churches, I was amazed and know that there is still room for others to follow suit. People can change and so can groups and ministries. When First Fruits of Zion made peace with other groups in the Messianic Movement, I was also gratified and ***I want us to never give up hope while there is breath.***

We may not see the changes in our lifetime, but we need to be both agents of change and firm believers in the possibility of change.

To summarize: here are some of the things I have said to you this morning

Despite everything we need to learn - ***not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together***

- I always want to give my first and my best energy to what G-d is doing in my life and what he wants me to be doing

Here is my long term prayer for the shul: - ***My prayer has always been that G-d would always surround me with good friends and that He would protect me from those who would want to harm me or my family in any way***

Why? Because- I have been ***mauled, roared at, betrayed, accused*** and even ***pursued***, but I have never been forsaken, abandoned or left out in the cold by the L-rd or by the good people He has also brought across our path – eventually.

In Him we are: **Never alone, never abandoned, always cherished, always encouraged, with the occasional slap upside the head (the Gibbs/Denosso syndrome),**

What does this mean practically? - protective measures and use evasive manoeuvres,

Here are the three kinds of damage:

- (1) - the damage that can come from **arguing**
- (2) the **bitterness** trap
- (3) **not believing** that people could learn from their mistakes and change.

Whether we like it or not, we are our brother's keeper and this morning, I hope I have shown you that our brother is also our keeper – may we both learn to do a good job.

Let's pray.