

Next, I ask the L-rd to help me feed myself, in my own devotional life and in the series which I prepare. **If what I share doesn't speak to me first – if it doesn't challenge and disturb me with at least as much impact as I want it to have in each of your lives, then I am wasting my breath and your time.** This is a big challenge, because I know that all of you are not able to attend every week, and that we will have visitors whose spiritual needs have to be met as well.

Next, I ask the L-rd for a double whammy: a **strong vision** of our calling as a Messianic Jewish community and a **creative vocabulary** that will stimulate this vision and cause it to grow and mature in every heart and every life. I want my words to live longer than the few minutes I have between the worship service, the Torah portion and the Kiddush. When I get up to speak, I don't want people to wince (here we go again), or to get in a comfortable position for a little shut eye – careful, I work out, so my aim with a siddur should even scare the sound man and you never know when it might be your turn to be really "**touched**" by one of my illustrations!

I want our times together to be both **relevant** and **significant**. I struggle with a balance between speaking to what is going on in our lives in the world we live in, day, by day, week by week, and year by year, and the **spiritual priorities** we need to keep integrating into our lives, because we are all preparing our lives for that big final exam – the cosmic wake-up call when each of us shall give an account for how we spent our lives and what we have treasured in our hearts. And you wonder why I have trouble sleeping some nights, because teachers and spiritual leaders get judged more severely - and they fire a coach who cannot pull his team together enough to win a few games once in a while. And this team has a pretty good record, so far.

So, as I drive to my subbing, and when I work for the temp agency, and when I was whipping around St. Albert getting "tipsy" delivering pizzas – big tipsies sometimes, I wrestle with my sermons. I want them to be fresh, and not stale, I want them to have **bulletin board appeal**, and not to be easily forgetful, like the episode of Soap, or a catchy advertising jingle. I usually do three or four drafts of what I want to say, long before I sit down at my computer and pull it together, and each week I struggle with my series, so it doesn't run out of steam and bore people. I don't mind if it **annoys** people, and **challenges** people, but if I'm bored, I'll go to sleep behind the pulpit and my family knows how loud I snore!

Well let me conclude and introduce my next series, cause I'm getting hungry too. How do I come up with **new material** all the time? Well, here again there has to be a balance. The L-rd places life themes in all of our hearts and you all know that I have spiritual priorities which I keep coming back to sort of like a personal **Jer. 6:16** with a little **Is. 28:9-13** thrown in, and spiced up with some **2 Peter 1:12-15**, with just a little touch of **Phil. 3:1**. But the L-rd is also constantly doing **new things** and **recycling** old things, and He wants us to do the same.

So, I read books, I listen to the media, and I engage people I meet in deep conversations, with some excellent jokes thrown in. I also look at what is going on in our local community and in that big bad world, and I bring all of that to bear prayerfully on the Bible, so that, as a community of Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we will always keep our double connection, first to the **eternal truths** of G-d's Word, and next to the **temporary world** we are called to reach out to and which remains a fascinating, potentially dangerous place, and through which we are journeying, but where we will never truly belong. Will you remember to pray for your rebbe in this battle?

That is why, I wanted to blow your **winter blues** away with one of my favourite Parables, one which continues to **kick, disturb** and even **inspire** this old hippy who will soon celebrate his 32nd spiritual birthday and enter the most exciting year of his spiritual walk – year 33. I can hardly wait, and who knows this might be the year I finally get to go to Israel. Let me walk you through the series, pray with you, celebrate Kiddush with you and get down to some serious schmoozing. Amen. Fasten your seat belts, hold on to the kids. Houston, I think we have lift off!