

21 July 2007
Sermon
Shabbat of Warning

A jackal and a hyena asked a lion to teach them to hunt. After a day's hunt, the bodies of antelopes and gazelles lay before them. The lion asked the jackal to divide the meat. The jackal divided it into three equal portions.

"What are these three piled for?" the king of the beasts asked the jackal.

"One is for you, one for the hyena and the third for me," the jackal replied.

Without a word, the lion gave the jackal a great swipe with his paw that nearly killed the jackal. He then asked the hyena to divide the meat.

"Why, they are already divided," the hyena replied. "One portion for your lunch, one for your dinner and the third for your breakfast tomorrow."

"Where did you learn such wisdom?" the lion asked.

"From the swipe you just gave the jackal," was the answer.¹

There are three different types of warning that God shows through the Torah portion.

The first type of warning is from the Past. It is said that, "Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it." In Deut. Moses went through a brief history of the first generation and the things they did, both good and evil. He gives a final reminder to the second that the reason they weren't eating of the fruit brought back by the spies was because the first never trusted in God. They simply disregarded what they were told.

In much the same way, Moses hoped that God's commands would be followed.

The second type of warning is given in Isaiah. It is in the present.

This type is more difficult to heed. With the first, you can at least see what happened to the people before. It is easy for us to criticize that first generation because we see their life on a page. If we had a biographer following us every day of our lives, how would we be read?

The second type deals with where we are in life now. We, for some reason, find it difficult to have someone tell us that we are wrong, that we have to change. And, blinded by that ball of rage hidden deep inside, we miss the thing that G-d intended for us. We miss what it is He is trying to say.

¹ *O.T. Made Simple* p.33

The third, quite frankly is a little scarier. As in the classic tale *A Christmas Carol*, the warning of the future can scare the pants off just about anyone. What will happen in the future if we do not heed his warning? The Gospel shall become a testimony against us. It is that moment in our lives, as we stand before Him and we hear either YES, I know who you are, or NO, I do not know you.

When I sit and think about all the things I know about Jesus, from what I read in the Bible and from what I see in creation, the more I wonder whether or not he knows me. And that, more than anything else, is what frightens me. It is the warning that says at some point there has to be a follow through.

Jesus said that G-d cares enough to feed the birds of the air, so how much more would He care for us. If I'm happy over the small simple things that Winston does, how much more would G-d be happy over our willingness and obedience.

So, we have seen the three warnings and have no excuse to miss anything. It's simple: You have seen what has happened, what could happen (if you should do this or that) and what will happen if you do not follow the commands of G-d.

We have seen what happened to the first generation when they disobeyed. In fact the Bible is full of people who have gone before to serve as a warning.

He has also told us what could happen in Isaiah:

19 *"If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land;*

20 *"But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly the mouth of the L-RD has spoken.*

And Stephen was kind enough to tell us what will happen.

The whole reason G-d has given these warnings is so that we will follow his commands in willingness and obedience. The root of these warnings come from not listening to them. That is why Moses had to recall the events in Deut. He wasn't giving a Second Law but merely reviewing the ones he had already relayed. He was saying to the next generation, "Look, these are here for a reason. Sh'ma! Pay attention, don't make the same mistakes!"

13 "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear G-d and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person."

14 "For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."