

19 Tammuz, 5763, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003 **Spiritual Sunshine: Real  
Peace** J. M. Terrett

<b>Pinchas</b>	<b>Phineas (dark-skinned)</b>
<b>Torah</b>	<b>Num. 25:10-30:1</b>
<b>Haftarah</b>	<b>I Kings 18:46-19:21</b>
<b>Brit Chadashah</b>	<b>John 2:13-22 (L); 2:13-25 (F)</b>

**Rom. 12:17, 18: "Do not render to anyone evil for evil. Seek that which is for good before all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, be at peace with all men."**

### **Introduction**

Rav Sh'aul was a **spiritual realist**, who understood what it means to live as light and salt in a dark, **spiritually bland world**. He does not call for believers to become perpetual victims, relying on the goodwill of others, in order to be spiritually fulfilled and holy, in a world that is often defined by the choices and responses of people who do not function with a **spiritual agenda**. What I believe he is trying to help us to see, is that *how we respond to what happens to us, and how we respond to how people treat us, will have more of an impact on our lives than what happens to us and how people treat us.*

In today's world, I believe it is called being **proactive**. In the Bible it is called seeking first G-d's Kingdom daily and walking according to the world which is to come. Spiritual sunshine does not depend on the details of our lives. Spiritual sunshine does not depend on getting that "edge" and figuring out how to make things happen to our advantage. It means bringing our faith to the details of our lives, and figuring out how to *let how we respond to what happens to us*, give us that spiritual "edge", which is the only advantage believers should strive for in this life – especially since it is the only advantage which will give us dividends in the life which is to come.

You see, I am more than an idealist, I am a spiritual realist and real peace, the peace which passes understanding and which comes from the One who has overcome the world, is one of the keys to living as a spiritual realist in an uncertain, unreliable world. In this generation, in the developed countries, we live with **incredible wealth** and with **incredible health**, safe from fear and danger. I say incredible health, because we have conquered most diseases and most of the remaining health concerns are related to lifestyle choices – how much and what we eat, and how much exercise we get, because with recreational substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs), *we are entertaining ourselves to death* as we dig our own graves with our own teeth.

Boredom, frustration and negative lifestyle choices are our major social problems and personal concerns, and *it seems the more we get, the more we want, and the less satisfaction we get* – so we turn it up, buy more, go faster – get more extreme, and yet most people find their lives **bland** and **unsatisfying**. This is mainly because they are looking for the wrong solutions and are not dealing with the real problems.

Poverty sucks, so does sickness, and war and violence are still savaging our planet when we ought to know better.

So what do we do? For us as believers, we need to live a **peace keepers** – not like the guys in blue helmets who try and stop armed conflicts, but like people who have peace and who want to keep it in a world which is at war with itself – and where most of the ideals of international politics are really people trying to get back at people and make them pay for what they did.

How do we get and keep real peace? Of course there are three keys from our passage this morning: (1) do not render evil for evil, (2) seek for that which is good for ALL people, and (3) live as peacefully as you can – so that the L-rd and your lifestyle can depend on you.

### **Not Rendering Evil For Evil**

I believe in justice and in righteousness, in **tikkun olam** (healing the world). We need to speak out for the widow, the orphan and the oppressed and poor of our world. But not by participating in the perpetual cycle of pay back – you know: "well, she started it and I only hit her back". True justice will one day be done, when we all stand before the eternal tribunal of the carpenter from Galilee. Until then, we need to help fix what gets broken, but more than that, *we need to avoid joining in on the breaking.*

Sin and evil have a four-generation lifespan, according to the scriptures. This means that if the generations of mankind would just stop letting in the sin which crouches at each of our doors, in, four generations, this old world would become a garden again. How? There is enough food, and there is enough wealth for everybody in the world to enjoy a more than reasonable lifestyle – we live in a world which flows with milk and honey, but *in every generation, we seem to eventually do our best to keep turning it into a wilderness.*

The glorious kingdom of Solomon self-destructed, and the House of Jacob may be coming home to the land, but they are still far from the L-rd, in a dark, bland world. So as a messianic Jewish community, we need to stop this cycle of rendering evil for evil, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. *What people do to us, may determine how we need to respond, but it should never determine our response.* Only our faith and our obedience to that faith should. It doesn't really matter who started it – Cain did – it matters who is going to stop it – Yeshua did on the cross and He calls us to live as **stoppers of evil, not starters**, until that glorious day when He returns and sets up our real home.

So we need to get real, and stay real, and make peace, not war, not matter what people do to us and no matter what is happening in our lives. And it ain't easy, but it is the practical part of our calling. Our devotional calling is to prayer, worship and to the study of His Word – and to the sharing of the same. Our practical calling is to seek for that which is good for all.

Let me ask you an astoundingly simple question, which strangely enough, is the same one Yeshua is going to ask you on the day of judgment: "who's side are you one – really?"

### **Generational Do Gooders**

What is on the inside, eventually comes out. As believers we need to be sure that what is happening on the outside, does not eventually come in, or stop the light and the salt from coming out. An impossible job? No, a lifelong mission, from generation to generation, from Abraham to the Messiah, and from the resurrection to the return. So should we go downtown and feed all the street people? Maybe, as long as we do not neglect their real problem, which is spiritual – you see *most people do not have sufficient spiritual means of support*, and real peace seeks for this "good" as the objective of any intervention we initiate in people's lives – or in any intervention we allow into our lives.

Our **faith** and our **spirituality** are the only two realities which matter in this life and in the life to come. Let the L-rd deliver you from the rat race of rendering evil for evil in this dog eat dog world. You do not have time for this kind of nonsense, cause you only have one life and *His calling on that life is the basis of the judgment we will all face before we enter into the life to come.*

### **Impossible Peace**

Which brings me to my last point and to my conclusion. Two pre-conditions exist before we can live at peace with all people. We can always live at peace with the L-rd, and we should be able to always live at peace with each other, but with the world and with some of us, it may not always be possible. And this is what verse 18 says. If is possible means it may not always be possible, but our job is to always make sure that as much as depends on us, it is always possible.

Then, when it is not possible, and we have done all which depends on us, we retreat back to verse 17 and seek for that which is good and avoid falling into the trap of rendering evil for evil. Real peace, understands that reality ain't always pretty and doesn't always cooperate. We have to be spiritually real, that is our job, both defensively and offensively.

What other people do is their business, what we do is our business. So this summer, and as we prepare for the fall feasts, may the L-rd teach us to mind our own business, with all people and in every situation. This is enough to keep us busy for several lifetimes, without wasting any more time rendering evil for evil.

Never let life or other people define how you live. If peace is not possible with some, let's make sure it is always possible with us, because we understand the terror and the wonder of eternity and G-d's coming judgment. Peace is His practical bottom line for believers, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. As we continue to fulfill our devotional bottom line, and grow beyond the bottom line, to fulfillment, we need, as part of that process, to cling to our practical bottom line, and seek to grow beyond that towards fulfillment in this crazy world. Keep the peace, always.

It is not always possible, with everyone and in every situation, but it should always remain our proactive, immutable program as we wander through the valley of the shadow of death towards our Father's House – don't get lost along the way, and don't let the lost pull you into their personal and societal hells along the way. Stay salty, and walk in spiritual sunshine, doing that which is possible, leaving the impossible to G-d – for this is the whole duty of man.

Let's pray.