

## **Closure** J. M. Terrett

Matot/Masei Tribes/Journeys of  
Torah: **Num. 30:2-36:13**  
Haftarah: **Jer. 2:4-28 (ash), 4:1, 2 (Seph)**  
Brit Chadashah: **Phil. 3:12-16 (L) James 4:1-12 (L & F)**

**Passage: Rom. 12:19-21:** "Do not take vengeance yourselves, but let go of anger, for it is written: vengeance is mine, retribution is mine says the L-rd. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so, you will be gathering burning coals upon his head. Do not allow yourself to be conquered by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Congregational discipline and the protection of individual rights is a necessary feature of what it means to walk with the L-rd in a vital, healthy community. However, there is a trap which our carnal natures can lead us into – and for lack of a better term, let us call it **come-up-man-ship**, a rigid idealism which demands perfect justice and tries to get even, when any wrong is committed.

We live in an unjust world, and it is our duty to defend the widow and the orphan and to speak out on behalf of the oppressed, but there are at least three ways the troubles of this old world can drive us spiritually insane and rob us of our spiritual sunshine and our peace of mind. **First of all**, we can just give up and retreat into our private world and look out for number one. This kind of apathy allows bullies and loud mouths to run rampant in the body of Messiah, and is a subtle form of cynicism which ends up causing people to give up on "church" because of all the nonsense which goes on: "in the L-rd".

This attitude has a cousin, which is just as unwise, and I will call it the **mister fix it syndrome**. "It's not fair, so I will make it fair", is the battle cry of this offended spirit, and he or she spends so much time putting out fires and fixing broken lives, that *their spiritual light dims and sometimes goes out* – especially when anger and frustration flood them with resentment when injustice triumphs – because *even in the body of our Glorious Messiah, evil and injustice will sometimes triumph*. And we are not strangers to this phenomenon at B'nai Chayim.

**The third** of the spiritual three stooges is a **perpetrator** who breaks all the rules, and who makes endless exceptions to prove that the carnal desires of their evil heart, and the pain they afflict on innocent victims is right, proper and even the L-rd's will. Oh where is a **heavy piece of wood** when you really need to whack someone with it? **The only piece of wood believers are allowed to grab, is the cross where our beloved Messiah died for idiots like us.** Which leads me to my topic this Shabbat: real closure.

I have been hurt more often and more deeply by other believers, than by people who profess no faith, and in many cases these people have not only gotten away with it, they appear to happy, blessed and continue to bully their way to Heaven.

Now there's the point, and I want to deal with it backwards, because we need to heed the words of that great protestant theologian, Martin Luther (who had some good things to say, before he drank too much beer and turned on the Jews): **believers need to live every day as if Messiah were crucified yesterday, risen today and returning tomorrow.**

If we ever lose our **eternal perspective**, we have succumbed to the wiles of the devil and we are no longer any good to the L-rd. I often say there are three devices of the devil, which constantly trip up believers: **temptation, condemnation and confusion.** Condemnation becomes a major problem when we expect the L-rd to deal with injustice in this life and *people frequently lose confidence in the L-rd when they see evil prospering and injustice flourishing.*

It is now nearly a year since our congregational *tsouris* nearly shattered our community, and I want to say three things about real closure as it applies to us, as we prepare our hearts for our annual spiritual virus check (the High Holy Days).

First of all, let me say that I am still mad, and often rage and sometimes I even cry - especially when the bills pile up and I see the pain and the damage my family has suffered through all of this. And it does no good for people to tell me to get over it (where is that heavy piece of wood), until I am over it. Of all the people involved, I am the most affected and it seems when I get over one aspect of the situation, another consequence comes knocking at my door – and I am the innocent party here –at least in this situation.

It's not fair and I can't fix it, so as your spiritual leader, what do I need to do – there is not enough port in the world to help me forget my troubles. So I do the second thing I want to speak to you about this morning – I rage at the L-rd in prayer until the pain goes away for awhile and He comforts me and rebukes me with great patience and annoying persistence. You see, *it ain't over in this life and before the next life gets going, there is a judgment which will affect me just as profoundly as the next man.*

It is this brick wall I want to keep running into, and hitting my head against, until the L-rd returns. I fully trust Him with my eternal soul and am persuaded He is able to keep me until that glorious day. When my spiritual rage turns me into one of the three stooges I spoke of earlier, I need a major attitude adjustment and I get it in prayer and in obedience, which leads me to my final point – **letting go and letting G-d handle it.**

Real closure will never come in this life, until we let go and cling to that heavy piece of wood on mount Calvary. Because real closure in this life is letting go, every time it comes back to haunt you, and learning to obey, to respond from an eternal perspective. And this perspective has at least two parts – mine, and G-d's. When the V bombs were falling on London during WWII, a clergyman told a colleague he wished he were G-d for a while and he would stop the bombs (which fell before you heard them coming). His friend replied that if he were G-d for even a split second, he, the friend, would not want to live in the same universe. Because our G-d is not a G-d of wrath and vengeance - yet.

I do not wish for anyone to feel the flames of eternal damnation, and I am learning not to suck my thumb and pout when I see incredible injustice ravaging the body of our Messiah – cause I at least expected better treatment from believers. That is not the point.

**We are called to give better treatment, and not to require it, in order to keep giving it.** We need to uphold the laws of our dominion, and to deal with problems in our community. We have done so, to the best of our ability and our mandate –the rest is up to G-d and to us. We are called to let Him take vengeance and take care of retribution – eternity is a long time to suffer loss during and the millstone of G-d may grind slowly, but it grinds very small. Ez. 33:11 should be our prayer and attitude.

We should not the death of the wicked (believers), but that they should repent and be restored to fellowship with us in the L-rd. *If we ever cease having fellowship in the L-rd, because of all the garbage which occurs in this life in the L-rd, then we block the vengeance and retribution of G-d and are in danger of becoming recipients of it in the process.*

So, let's rage in prayer. Let's rant together, to get it off our chest before we take action. May the only action we take be to overcome evil with good, and no be overcome by evil – as one of three spiritual stooges: **Moe** always tries to fix and ends up making it worse, **Larry** doesn't care anymore but always gets caught in the middle anyway, **Curley** wants to give as good as he gets and ends up getting slapped around for his troubles.

We need to learn to let go, and to encourage people to work it through, not suppress it, ignore it or pretend it's not there. I will rage and rant, till it quits hurting, and whenever it starts hurting, **but I will never begin hurting anyone else as part of the process.** I will do my best to act with as much integrity as I can muster, and I will follow biblical due process if it kills me (what a way to go!). I will quit trying to fix it when there is nothing I can do about it with a clear conscience, and I will focus on the Day which is coming and continue to do His will for me. For this is the whole duty of man and the whole point of my life.

If ever I get sidetracked, I want to be hit with that big piece of wood, **cause being overcome with evil is the greatest tragedy a believer can experience in this life.** How we respond and how we live in this life has an impact on the life which is to come, and if we live for that impact, G-d will take vengeance and arrange retribution in His good time. If that is not good enough for me or for you, boy, are we in trouble – we are spiritually insane and have become part of the problem, one of the three stooges.

I want to give you all a little homework. Look up the following passages on closure so that you can let go and be healed inside, while we wait for that glorious day

Ps. 73 (whining helps sometimes). Eccl. 7:15-21 (sometimes life sucks). Matt. 13:24-30 (G-d ain't fooled and He knows what He is doing). Matt. 10:16; and Prov. 22:3 (don't be a putz). I Cor. 4:5; Rom. 2:16; Eccl. 12:13, 14 (there is a day coming when everything will make sense forever) Matt. 7:1, 2; John 7:24 and 2 Tim. 2:24-26 (mind your own business and keep your own nose clean).

Shabbat shalom. Let's pray, stooges, brats and other grumpy children.