

Sh'lach l'Cha

Send For Yourself

**Torah:** Numbers 13:1-15:41

**Haftarah:** Josh. 2:1-24

**Brit Chadashah:** Heb. 3:7-19 (L); Heb. 3:7-4:11 (F)

I have heard it said that people's lives often become a metaphor or symbol for what is happening on the inside. This means that what is happening on the inside eventually comes out, and for some of us that may be pretty scary. When the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king in the place of Saul, he was told something very surprising.

He was told not to pay attention to the outward appearance of any of the sons of Jesse, because the L-rd looks at the heart. The rest of us have to get to know the person and eventually, what it is the heart comes out. G-d sees it right away. G-d wants to liberate the David in each of us.

In this series I want us to take the summer to consider what is growing in our hearts, and how what comes out of our hearts is filling our lives, during this the second year of our congregational life. We need to ask the L-rd to show us how to have a power pack which will empower our lives as we express love, joy and peace, rather than sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft.

Our Connection between our true inner selves and our outer lives either gives us great spiritual power, or the raging of the flesh and every kind of disharmony and disorder. We either exercise patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness and gentleness, or are ravaged by rivalries (hatred), quarrels (discord), jealousies animosities (fits of rage), disputes (feuds), divisions and factions.

Unfortunately, all too often, the works of the flesh characterize the kinds of exchanges which occur between believers and between communities of believers. This is not how we function at B'nai Chayim, because we have determined that if cannot know anyone according to the Spirit, that is, according to the fruit of the spirit, then it is not worth our time to know them in any other way. Actually getting to know someone in the flesh places our own spirituality in a position which is hazardous to our own health (2 Cor. 5:16).

How do we prevent the slide into the flesh, both as individuals and as a community? Besides our excellent constitution and the supervision of an excellent leadership, our personal and community resource manager, self control, allows us to react both according to our power pack and our connection, so that we do not live full of envy, drunkenness, gluttony (orgies) and the like.

So, it is up to us to make sure we are growing spiritually and not moulding, rotting or allowing our flesh to rage through our lives with the destructive zeal of charnel spirituality (James 3:13-18).

Last week I talked to you about goodness, and this week I want to talk to you about its companion, kindness. **Goodness is the directional, intentional intervention we adopt as our primary response to the people around us.** However people choose to respond to us should not determine our response to them, because we want to grow in the spirit and not in the flesh.

We forgive, we accept, we do good and we do not call down fire up the Samaritan villages we pass through in this life, on our journey home to our Father's house. However goodness is more of an action, and **kindness is more of a reaction**. It is more of what we wish, how we bless, when we are unable to take direct action.

So when we wish people shalom, we are showing kindness. When we pray for them, and give them emotional support and counsel, we are being kind. But there is another aspect of kindness which I would like to touch on, and it involves another Samaritan.

Once upon a time, this Samaritan guy was travelling behind a priest and a Levite, on their down from Jerusalem. These two had probably sneered at the Samaritan, or exchanged some insults concerning why he was on their turf. Samaritans worshipped on mount Gerizim and not on Mount Zion, so what was this spiritual outcast doing in kosher territory?

The two kosher Jews pass by a wounded man who was probably dying, and did not want to risk becoming unclean, either by blood or by touching what was probably only a few hours away from being a corpse. Anyway, some soldiers would find him soon enough, or the local wild dogs would take care of him when the sun went down – and what they left, the vultures would clean up.

Having to avoid contact with both a Samaritan and a dying man in the same day probably made both of them feel the need for a bath and perhaps even a change of clothes. The roads were getting so clogged with trash these days. One of the pieces of trash, the heretical Samaritan, came upon the other piece of trash and had a completely different reaction: kindness.

You see, goodness is what we do in response to the commandments as a directional imperative. **Kindness is more a compassionate response to brokenness and defilement, and may even move us from pity to performing acts of mercy.**

What did the outcast do? He intervened to save the man's life and to provide for his needs long enough for him to recover. He probably had to perform Samaritan cleansing rituals, because of his blood defilement, but he understood that **if we are to really make a difference in this sorry world, if we are really to take our healing mandate (tikkun olam) seriously, then we have to get our hands dirty.**

Not dirty in the performance of dirt, but in the healing of wounds, and the performance of interventions where we become involved with those whose lives are bleeding, either physically or otherwise. This week I seemed to run into a lot of street people, and I was really busy, trying to get from one job to another, as I make my final preparations to go to Boston – a Terrett pilgrimage to bring some colour and life to our brethren south of the true North strong and free. They may have won the cup, but we all know that it was only because they had more Canadians on their team than Calgary did. Pray for us, because we might find ourselves in the awful position of defending Calgary, our trophy challenged neighbour in southern Alberta.

So on my way to submit my passport, this young kid on roller blades asks me for some money so he can eat. My first reaction was no, go away and get a job (and a bath, a haircut, and phone your mother, and why not ask your own father for money, who do think I am? Do I look like Social Services?). He turned and began to skate away. I wasn't rude, but a little annoyed that someone else was after my money.

Then I remembered the kids in Tofield – one of them lived on the street for four years before getting his life together. Then I thought of my own children, and all the young people we have tried to help and I had a change of heart. I know, even in the L-rd, **what goes around, comes around**, so I made a little investment in my future, and in my children's future – and our ministry's future.

So, I took a five dollar bill out of my wallet, money I could have used for lunch, for milk, for gas, for parking, for photo-copying – it's not like I have much of an expendable income and I work hard for my money. I called him back, gave him five dollars and told him to buy himself something good to eat.

Right away I thought he would go get some crack, or buy some booze, so I committed him and my money to the L-rd. I showed kindness. He wasn't exactly in the ditch, but life was probably beating him up and he looked like a fairly decent kid – about seventeen. **I didn't have to, but if I want mercy to be shown to me, I had better learn how to show it to others .**

Then coming out of Safeway on Wednesday, there is one of these guys with a magazine about street people, asking for a donation. He was missing most of his front teeth, and was around my age. He was scruffy, looked more than a little confused and did not seem to be getting many donations. Well, your rabbi pulled out a loonie – one of the last in my shrinking wallet, and I put it in his hand.

He called out a thank you after me, but I was in a hurry and I really didn't have a lot of time. If we are ever in too much of a hurry to show kindness, we forget who we are and what we are called to be and do on our pilgrimage home.

I know some of us may not feel it is appropriate to give money to street people who may just use it for drugs and alcohol, but there are many other hurting people who need our help, even if their situation is due to their own folly.

It is my humble policy to reach out, and gently remind them that I told you so and various other gems from my great store of wisdom and insight, not as a replacement for my help, but as part of it. So sometimes I find myself becoming the grumpy helper, because I want people to learn to quit hitting the ditch and learn to live and make good decisions, instead of wrecking their lives and coming to me, and coming to us to fix what they messed up AGAIN.

Parents, does that sound familiar? It does to G-d. Most people ask for His help as a last resort, with no intention of making any changes in their lives in response to any help. **It is kind of like asking the cosmic sugar daddy for more money, more energy and more resources to waste.** Well, as a believer, I know this life is fleeting and that one day, whether we like it or not, all of us are going to stand before the cosmic sugar daddy's Son and He is going to require that we give a full account of our hearts and for all the choices and responses we have ever made.

This is a pretty scary thought. If I can help someone along the way, or if I can influence someone along the way, then why not do so? I have been shown much kindness in my life, even when I did not deserve it. On the other side of the equation, there have been many times when no mercy, no kindness has been shown to me and I have been abandoned, betrayed, hurt, abused and ravaged.

And here I am not talking either about my marriage or my tax return. My life, as a young person, as a believer, a parent and as a teacher and as a rabbi, would make a pretty good series of very sad country and western songs. "Somebody keeps doing me wrong" "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, and nobody really cares" "I got bruises on my wounds and so many busted bones that it's hard to find a new place to kick, but you'll find it, again and again." Or my favourite: "they said 'cheer up things could get worse', so I cheered up, and sure enough, things got worse".

So, bleeding in my little corner feeling sorry for myself, I consider opening a new store - you know 'victims are us'. Well if there is a lack of kindness in my life on the receiving end, what can I do about it, besides complain? I can sow kindness by being on the giving end. Not beyond my resources or my ability, but according to what I have and what I can do. I can't give much, but I can help where I can, and reap help later on.

At B'nai Chayim, we need to stubbornly remain part of the solution, showing kindness to one another and to all, which in many cases is our best and most effective witness. Let's build a kind shul, a helpful shul and watch what G-d will do through our kindness. Let's pray.

Torah: Called or Stalled. When you lapse, you do laps.

Num. 13:1-15:41 They are ready, with everything they need for a swift entrance into the land, in time to harvest their enemy's crops, while their memory of the Exodus was still fresh. Twelve leaders take off and all of them see the same thing, but only two see the potential which our problems always bring with them. Moshe saves their tuches again. And when they are told to go back, one year for every day they explored, they mess up again and encounter their first military defeat. The portion ends with some ritual instructions, because no matter what is going on in our lives, we need to worship G-d.

(1-3)14:2, 3, 4

(4) 15:16 Same law for all – never any second class citizens in the kingdom, ever.

Haftarah:

Joshua 2:1-24. Two guys hide in an unlikely place and find out G-d has prepared their enemies hearts to panic. They go home and rejoice in the hand of the L-rd.

(5) 2:9

(6) 2:11

Brit Chadashah:

(7) 4:1 All moments are not equal in this life and our hearts are not always ready to change. When we are called to change, we have two, even three choices. We can change, we can wander, or we can go back to Egypt. We are all called, and sometimes we get stalled.

As we go into the summer and as we begin to prepare our hearts for the High Holy Days, let us purpose to learn to move when we are called and to learn to repent when we are stalled. When things go round and round in our lives, it is the L-rd bringing them back until we deal with them.

May the L-rd cause our stalling to lapse, and may we do as many laps as we need until we are prepared to answer our calling.

Shalom.