

11 Sivan, 5765 (18/06/05) **The Dynamics of Spiritual Stability** J. M. Terrett  
(from Eph. 4:11-16; Ps. 23; Matt. 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 11:21-33; I Cor. 3:9-15 and 2 P. 2:22)

As we come into our third year of ministry as a community, we are developing our own unique identity and personality. One of the major objectives of any new spiritual community is to develop stability on all levels, both as individuals and as a community, and this is a long process which requires **time**, **effort** and **training**. At B'nai Chayim, we want to develop into a dynamic, stable community of believers who are coming to terms with BOTH their giftings and their shortcomings, and also, into people who are passionate about turning every experience of their lives into personal expressions of faith which reflect a deep, rich, growing spirituality, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. These are very **high standards** and pretty **extensive expectations**, but when I chant the Shema and recite the L-rd's Prayer, I don't see any possible room for a lesser response. The entire focus of Ps. 23 assumes this kind and level of spiritual maturity.

Recently I have been thinking over my ministry and have been examining some **life themes** and **personal goals** which I have cherished since coming to the L-rd, some 33 years ago. I came from an extremely dysfunctional background and had more problems than anyone else I knew. In my years as a believer, this has made me both very compassionate, very patient, as well as a good crisis manager. As a matter of fact, in the second year of our marriage, when Patti and I thought we were settling into a little country church, in Hughenden, Alberta, far away from everything, we made the mistake of attending a Revival Meeting in the next town.

I sat at the front of the meeting and listened with interest to the speaker as he shared all the things the L-rd was doing in his life. He closed with an altar call and asked everybody to come up front and hold hands in a circle. When he took my hand, he began to prophesy and the words of that prophecy have echoed through our ministry ever since. He said: "I am sending you to the ones who have been passed over and neglected, to glean among those who have been missed." I have always understood this to mean that we have been called to help those who have fallen through the cracks and have been ignored or rejected by many other ministry settings.

And true to form, in every ministry setting where we have functioned, neglected and abandoned people with deep hurts and **multiple dysfunction** have always come out of the woodwork – and that for one main reason – that is where the L-rd found me. Ever since I gave my heart to Him, He has been helping me to **stabilize** and to move beyond all the pain and damage I have encountered. He has been teaching me to own the need to heal and not to perpetually **internalize** the pain and damage to the extent that my lifestyle and how I habitually react, causes me to produce **new pain** and cause **further damage**. He has been teaching me to escape from the **vicious cycle of trauma induced, self-inflicted problems**, which were spawned in my heart and life by the garbage I have encountered through my own dysfunction, but which have taken on a life of their own. A convert to the gospel dedicated to the spread of chaos and dysfunction.

He has been showing me that every believer, from the greatly damaged to the moderately damaged, needs to come to a place in their lives where they respond to damage in such a way as to prevent it from becoming part of the **life strategies** and **behaviours** they fill their life with. That is to say, when we came out of Egypt, we came out with **Egyptian habits** and with the **defensive habits** we learned as slaves, and if we are not careful we will perpetually create newer little versions of Egypt and of slavery wherever we wander. This is because although we have been delivered from Egypt and from slavery, we have not been set free from their **impact** on our inner lives. We need to be set free from the **effects** of Egypt and the **attitudes** and **habits** of slavery which many of us have cherished too long in our perpetual search for bottomless pity.

Once Johnny has been taken out of the country, the country needs to be taken out of Johnny. Israel brought **Egyptian spirituality** and **spiritual slavery** with them and needed to do some deep inner work, in order to be set free on the inside as well. They are not the only ones who make golden calves, and whine about the lack of water and the strict diet of manna. I have called this lack of inner freedom the **baggage** we bring with us into the faith and I see that it must be our **primary community mandate** to be a place where **unpacking** and **repacking** can occur.

We need to remind ourselves that once we have been set free from our **outer enemies**, we need to work on the **inner ones** – on the **fifth column of negative, carnal behaviour and emotional and spiritual immaturity which causes so many believers and communities to flounder through a perpetual cycle of serial self destruction, just because they have not allowed the power of our L-rd to set them free from the inner hell they live in and which they don't grow out of, once they are released from the concentration camp the L-rd found them in.**

Our biggest struggle as believers will always be with ourselves, and not with the world, or with the enemy, or any other adversary, real or imagined which we may encounter as we are learning to walk with the L-rd (Rom. 8:37-39 and I Cor. 10:13). How do we deal with this **inner infection** and begin the long hard process of shifting the inner furniture so that our hearts and inner world can be a suitable dwelling for the **shabbat** and **shaLoam** which the L-rd wishes to grow in the depths of our being (Matt. 11:28-30)? **It involves taking some major personal responsibility for some of the attitudes and the habits which perpetuate our captivity and cause us to shoot our own toes off.**

Are you ready for a really dirty word? It's called **growing up** and **moving on** from blaming and transferring and perpetuating all the negative behaviour we learned when we were wallowing in Egyptian slavery. It means actually learning new strategies and changing old slavery behaviours – and moving out of the **burning barn cow spirituality** (the tendency to revert to old habits under duress). Churchill said that while the Allies won the war, he was not sure they had enough gumption to win the peace? After the excitement of Egypt and the thrill of the mountain, when the Midianites and the Canaanites come calling, do you just give in without a fight, or are you prepared to learn how to fight and take control of your inner life away from the ghosts of trauma past? I tried real hard to find a Shakespearean reference for Jack, but Dickens will have to do.

One of my ministry weaknesses has always been to feel so sorry for people that I did not require them to take charge over their own baggage and their own attitudes, which, eventually are the real cause of most people's problems – **the choking, withering and doubting which renders His glorious Word of none effect in the carnal night of our inner lives.** In a very real sense, we are all packing our hearts and lives for the Day of Judgment, when we shall be judged on the **reasons** behind all the **reactions** we have generated in this life. What is your heart packed with?

My ministry has never been primarily to help people find faith in Yeshua, as much as it has been to help people come to terms with that faith and with the **damage** which they bring with them into the faith and especially with how to come to terms the **changes** which need to occur in their lives, in order to **repair** the damage and cause our Messiah's Kingdom to flourish in the **depths** and in the **heights** of their lives. Since I received that prophecy I have understood that our ministry will always include people whose wounds have been so very severe or who have been clinging so stubbornly to **bitterness** and **self pity** that they have never been able to function with any stability.

And often it may be precisely for this reason that they have been so neglected, and have failed to find their place in any particular spiritual community. Along with most caregivers, I have found that high needs people consume lots of energy and are not able to offer much back in return. And frequently, these people, just want enough help to see them through one more crisis, and then just go back to the burned out barn, because that is the only way they know how to live. They don't want to change or they are afraid to change.

Our greatest challenge, as a caring community of Jews and Gentiles will always to believe in people enough to give them the care that they need in order for them to **recover** from both the **damage** which has been inflicted on them and from their **burning barn cow spirituality.** People need to learn to begin to grow spiritually, instead of just going round and round with the same pain and damage, forever needing help and always too scared, or too stubborn to change and never wiling or able to become a functioning and contributing part of the same support network which refused to pass over or neglect them. So here's rub, the dilemma which would have even driven Hamlet crazy. Oh joy, and great Caesar's ghost, a Shakespearean reference!

The Good Samaritan did not operate a **ditch-searching ministry**, and we do not know if the man was ever able or willing to pay the Samaritan back. But the whole point of his intervention was not to spend the rest of his life looking after the wounded man he helped out of the ditch. The Samaritan reached down and helped him out of the ditch; his help did not leave him in the ditch.

B'nai Chayim will always be a **redemptive community** prepared to go the extra mile for anybody who is in need. But that always needs to be only the **first part** of our involvement in people's lives. We are called to show love and to exercise mercy, and kindness, but because we know about the coming Kingdom and the coming judgment, **we do not want to just help people have a nicer ride on their way to eternity**. We want to understand why it is G-d has brought these people into our lives. Was it just because He knew He could trust us to offer tangible help, and to back off and wait for them to begin to wake up spiritually and seek the L-rd, or was it so that they could come to the L-rd and be set free from BOTH the **damaged condition** we found them AND from the **damaging life strategies** and **negative heart attitudes** which keep them in a cycle of self abuse and serial crisis? Sometimes, it's hard to tell the difference between people who are sheep in wolves clothing and those who are wolves in sheep's clothing.

This is not always an easy question to answer, and, L-rd help me, in my ministry I have always tried to err on the side of too much compassion, rather than too little. Hence, sometimes the people I reach out to and try to help, bite me and turn on me, when I try to move them along the road to actually **growing up spiritually** and when I try to persuade them to take some **responsibility** for the **self inflicted turmoil of their inner lives**. Sometimes these people just limp and stagger back into the ditch when I encourage them to actually find strategies for healing, instead of wallowing in pain and anger with a **perpetual victim mentality**, as if abuse made us martyrs (2 Peter 2:22).

**Compassion** and **pity** are not at all related, and as we enter our summer countdown to the High Holy Days, I want to refocus our ministry emphasis on compassion as a mishpocah, so that we are all on the same page. **Mercy** which does not equip its recipients to grow beyond the pain and trauma it finds them in, is carnal, immature, even just token help – less than useless and a colossal waste of time. **Mercy** which requires that **healing** be followed by **growth** which leads to **stability**, is what true compassion is all about, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

Even when people turn on us or when they wander back over the horizon (or back into the wood work or bolt back into the burning barn), mercy is never wasted, and good deeds will be repaid (Gal. 6:9, 10), but our input into people's lives must never just stop there, or make people into **permanent spiritual wards of the B'nai Chayim sugar daddy factory**. We need to love and to forgive and to get our hands dirty as we intervene and meet people's needs, but with **the uncompromising goal of helping these people grow beyond their wounding and into their gifting**. Anything less is unacceptable. Burning barns rarely kill cows, running back into them does. How's your barn doing? How's your growth coming? Are you ready to stabilize or does that ditch the L-rd found you in kinda look comfortable – the spiritual home you're not ready to give up? Would a few more years wandering in the turmoil of your inner wilderness do you more good than somebody trying to teach you how to eat manna and drink from the rock? Bugs live in the woodwork, not believers. Believers undergo an inner transformation which sets their spirit free, bugs just undermine and spread infection and disorder. Our calling at B'nai Chayim is to be believers, not bugs, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, d'or l'd'or, l'olam va'ed, ameyn.

Next week, we'll talk about moving from deliverance to victory and from victory to sustained maturity. Let's pray.