

Heart's Baggage. Pilgrim's Progress

Naso

Elevate

Unplugged from and plugged into

Torah:

Num. 4:21-7:89

(1) 5:28. But if the wife has not soiled herself, and she is pure, she shall be known as innocent and shall have children.

(2) 6:5. All the days of their Nazarite vow, no razor shall come upon the head; until the time is completed for which they separate themselves unto the L-RD; they shall be holy, they shall let the locks of their hair grow long.

(3) 7:9. But he gave none (of the carts or the oxen) to the sons of Kehath, because, according to their functions, they had to carry the holy things upon their shoulders.

(4) 7:89. When Moses entered into the tent of meeting to speak with the L-RD, he heard the voice which spoke from above the mercy seat (Kaporot), which was placed upon the Ark of the Covenant (witness), between the two cherubim. And he spoke with the L-rd.

Haftarah:

Jud. 13:2-25

(5) 13:7. But he said to me: you shall become pregnant and shall give birth to a son; and now drink no wine, nor strong drink, and eat nothing which is impure, for this child shall be consecrated to G-d from the his mother's womb until the day of his death.

(6) 13:25. And the Spirit of the L-RD began to stir him in Mahaneh-Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Brit Chadashah:

Jn. 12:20-36

(7) 12:25. The one who loves his life shall lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world, while conserve it for life everlasting.

Ps. 67

Jewish Hero: Manoach (Samson's dad)

Passages:

Eph. 4:30. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of G-d, by whom you have been sealed for the Day of Redemption.

I Thess. 5:19. Do not quench the Spirit.

Eph. 4:21-24. If at least you have heard Him, and if, conformed to the truth which is in Yeshua, it is in Him you have been instructed to despoil yourself in that which concerns your old life, of the old man who is corrupted by deceitful lusts and to be renewed in the spirit of your understanding and to cloth yourself with the new man, created according to G-d in a righteousness and a holiness which is produced by the truth.

Gen. 4:7. Certainly if you do that which is good, your countenance shall be lifted up, but if you do that which is bad, sin is crouching at your door and its desires are towards you, but you must dominate over it.

Luke 9:23. Then he said to all: if someone wishes to come after Me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross daily and let him follow me.

In this series we are looking at two things mainly. We are first looking at the *journey* each of us is taking, from the *cradle to the grave* and, secondly, we are also looking at *what we are packing in our hearts*, both things which will be useful for our journey and things which will be useful when we stand before our King at the end of our journey. Part of this journey also involves understanding the *vehicle* in which we are travelling and which will be with us every day until our journey is over – and here I am talking about our flesh – that *physical, tangible part* of us which is called at least two things in the Scriptures.

It is first called the *temple of the Holy Spirit*, because no part of it is evil in and of itself and every part of it can be used to served the King, both in what we do (and where we go) and in what we do not do (and where we do not go). This is the *physical flesh*, the *metabolism*, with all of its organs, muscles and bones and circulation. There is nothing *evil or wrong* with this vehicle, and neither is there anything *good or right* with it. It is like a gun or a car or even a match – *it is only going to be good or evil depending on how it is used and on the reasons it is used.*

In a sense we are *trapped* in this body and limited by it, because it is *neutral* and can neither *help* us, nor really *hinder* us – it is up to us to decide how we are going to drive it and use it, which brings me to the second thing it is called – our *sinful nature* which is totally corrupt and sold out to desires and to lusts and which is never satisfied, but always hungry for more (insatiable) – a *wild animal* which needs to be caged.

In other words it is our *connection* to the physical world and is subject to stimuli, both from the *inside* and from the *outside* – sort of like *an endless data stream*, always receiving and generating information and it is up to us to be on top of this information and to decide how to *respond*, both to that which comes in from the *outside* and which comes up from the *inside*. A ship can never tell you where to go or how to sail.

When I said that we have to keep the flesh on a short lease, it means several things. **First** it means that if we want to believe that our flesh will ever change – get better or get worse, we are *deceiving* ourselves – it will become what we let it become. It will always be the wild animal looking for ways to break free and get its own way. **Next** it means that it is *controllable*, because before it can do anything, it has to have *permission*, because *though it will always be a wild thing, we will always be the driver.* And **lastly**, we have to understand that it will always *try* to become the driver and *will want to control us, instead of being controlled by us.* Sort of sounds like an *unstable character*, always scheming, never really reliable, like an addict who means well, but who can never really be trusted. That is the flesh – welcome to the *real world* to the real personal conflict of the ages – between our spirit and our flesh!

So what do we do with the flesh which will never change? *We quit trying to change it* and instead, we need to learn to expend our energies at *learning to control it* and *maintain that control over it.* *Sin* and the *flesh* are not the same thing, but *sin is always trying to get control over the flesh* and will always be cloning and trying new approaches, constantly and relentlessly for our entire lives, from the cradle to the grave. It is an *evil partnership* we have to keep from forming and to break it up once it succeeds in forming.

Now, having said that, we have to also understand that *the flesh is not always evil* – it tells us when we are hungry, itchy, tired, threatened. It gives us the *sensory information* which we need to receive in order to relate to what is happening around us. But it will never be able to tell what to do with information we receive from it, other than to say there are *needs* and *desires* which will not go away and we have to decide which ones to satisfy and which ones to resist and refuse. Our sensors can never tell us what to do.

Our flesh is both *neutral* and *biased*. **Neutral in that it does not distinguish between good and evil and biased because it wants what it wants, when it wants it and this will never change.**

Now when we are hungry and thirsty we need to nourish ourselves – the moral decision we have to make is *how* and *when* to satisfy our needs and wants. We can develop discipline to control the flesh, but this discipline must be maintained because you can never turn your back on the flesh, because it will jump over the fence and run wild all over the neighbourhood – because it has no concept of better or worse, just of desire and satisfaction. Success lies in effective control.

Some people fall into the trap of thinking that *desires are valid* in and of themselves and that their satisfaction is both a *right* and an *obligation*, instead of seeing that desires are only *information* and it has to be us who must decide if satisfaction is appropriate, or if some other course of action is required (1 Cor 10:13).

The flesh can be disciplined if ***we learn to undress the old man and to dress the new man***, who has a new mandate – *righteousness* and *holiness* – **a new set of spiritual drives and desires** which now take precedence over those physical, carnal ones. So when our flesh comes to tell us what it desires and what satisfaction it is seeking, we can look at our *spiritual needs* and **make sure that the spiritual ones are first priority** and the flesh learns to take second place. It will not like this, anymore than our body enjoys a workout or a good scrub, but we sure enjoy its benefits.

Control and ***crucifixion*** are related because they are both focused on a ***clear set of priorities***. We are those who see things **two ways** instead of only one way. We see what the flesh wants and we see what the Spirit wants and in this tension, it still remains up to us to decide ***which needs are going to be met***. ***Control is not an impossible job, expecting the flesh to learn its lessons and behave is the impossible job.***

This needs to be a staple of our spiritual walk with the L-rd. We have to ***maintain control*** over a flesh ***which is both controllable and which will never be under control***. It is a wild thing which we can tame, but ***we can never tame the wildness out of it*** and **can never trust it to be our guide, even if it wants to be**. Its job is to give us information, not guidance. We will either make our decisions based on this **information** or based on the **guidance** we are supposed to seek (to learn) in order to make decisions. It should never be a question of: if it feels good do it or if it feels bad, don't do it – ***it should always be a question of is it right or is it wrong, whatever it feels like.***

We need to see this ***perpetual conflict***, not as an ***endless fight*** with a ***rebellious nature***, but as a **series of case by case encounters** where our control over the wild thing we are travelling to glory in will be ***strengthened*** or ***weakened*** by the **choices** (decisions) we make. Just like a house will only remain clean if it is constantly cleaned, so our flesh will only remain under control if it is constantly controlled.

Keeping it on a short leash means learning that ***the leash is more important than the flesh*** and that ***it is the leash which should determine how we treat the flesh and not the flesh which should decide how we treat the leash***. Neither the flesh nor the leash are our enemies, unless we allow the flesh to try and break free of the leash or if we try and choke the flesh with the leash.

Is it tiring to have to constantly be keeping the flesh on a short leash? Yes and no. Yes, because we should never expect the flesh to get any better or to act in any other way than to be a constant source of information, which will always push for the satisfaction of its desires, no matter if they are right or wrong. No, because it is possible to maintain control by ***listening first to the Spirit and then to the flesh***, because G-d knows what we need before we ask. He also knows what we want and will teach us to discern the difference. ***He will meet our needs, never our wants.***

Our society is increasingly being based on **physical satisfaction** of many kinds. We are told that the point of life is to aim for: freedom from symptoms, better and better tasting food, better looking clothes, better sounding music, more interesting shows and more stimulating vacations. There will always be an **undercurrent of conscience** (of the Spirit), but more and more **morality** is being portrayed as **moralizing** and so much of that which used to be taught and which used to be believed is being challenged and **the flesh is increasingly being portrayed as the hero and the spirit is being portrayed as the enemy who wants to cramp our style.**

Hard work is still a good thing, as long as it is to get what we want and our diminished sense of duty is an attempt by the flesh to take over our society and our world and **make physical satisfaction the highest good and the point of life.** People still see things in terms of good and bad, but what that means is shifting and **much of that which was once bad is seen as good and much of that which is seen as good was once seen as bad.** (Is. 5:20, 21).

This is really a shift, where **the flesh wants to take control instead of being controlled** and many of the values being taught by the media and even in the schools is a shift away from controlling the flesh to being controlled by the flesh and this is a tendency which believers must resist, even if our standards are challenged and we are told that what we feel is wrong isn't – and here I am talking about sexual ethics and the politics of prosperity versus those of responsibility.

We understand that we are only **strangers** and **pilgrims** passing through this life to our true home and how we live needs to reflect the **priorities of that journey** and we need to understand that **our flesh is not a priority**, but is only a **vehicle** we need to gain control over in order to accomplish those priorities.

We should not be guided by what feels good or what feels bad, but what feels right and what feels wrong. Pain and pleasure remain, for us information and **never become objectives.** **We are never put here to maximize our pleasure and to minimize our pain, we are put here to discover the truth and to learn to seek the King in righteousness, mercy and holiness,** even if our flesh will never accept this agenda and will always want to rebel against it. **We understand that the strength of our control is more important than the desire of the flesh** which are endlessly seeking satisfaction and must be constantly reigned in.

This does not have to be a miserable existence of perpetual frustration, it can be a joyful existence of perpetual control. Pets reflect how they are treated by their owners, just as children reflect how they are raised by their parents – with some exceptions. **A firm good control makes pets a joy and children a pleasure.** They will never stop being pets and until they grow up, they will remain kids and **success depends on maintaining control**, not on trying to stop pets from being pets or children from being children. A short leash is not cruel, it makes the journey pleasant for both the pet and the owner.

How are you treating your **flesh**? Your **leash**? How are you letting your flesh treat you? **Is in on a short lease or is it running wild and dragging you through places a believer should never go?** It will never change, it can only be controlled – **how is your control doing?** Are you the driver or are you being driven? Are you living for spiritual satisfaction or are you being driven to satisfy that which is never satisfied? **Is where you are going becoming less important than where you are now?** Have you lost a clear view of your final destination and has your daily become the focus of your life?

Are you living as a **temple** or are you living so that **your desires drive your life?** What reasons guide your life and the decisions you make in this life? Are you relying on the help of the Spirit within you or are you giving the flesh that role? **Who are you listening first to?** Are you living as a pilgrim **building up good heart baggage**, or is how you are living, depriving your heart and life of the **treasures** which will be revealed in the life which is to come? **Is it time to reign in your flesh and strengthen your leash?** Let's pray.