

3 Tammuz, 5772 (23/6/12), *Heart's Baggage, Pilgrim's Progress* J.

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Learning to Listen to His Voice in Your Heart

Korach Korah (Bald) Shooting the messenger backfires
Torah: Num. 16:1-18:32

(1) 16:26. He spoke to the assembly and said: separate yourselves from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing which belongs to them, for fear that you would perish at the same time as they are punished for all their sins. *They had risen up against Moses and Aaron (blaming the leadership for their own folly) and wanted a new administration so they could perhaps change G-d's mind.*

(2) 16:39, 40. The priest, Eleazar took the bronze censors that had been presented by those who were burned; and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar – as a reminder to the Israelites that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, shall approach to offer incense before the L-RD, so as not to become like Korah and his company – just as the L-RD had said to him through Moses. *They would have no descendants among the people – neither the rebellious leaders of Reuben, nor the non-priestly Levites, but the memory of their rebellion would serve as a warning not to try and kill the messenger when you do not like the message.*

(3) 16:48. They placed themselves between the living and the dead and the plague was stopped. *This is the third time the people were nearly consumed because of their rebellion and the third time that a core of rebellious leaders was smitten by the L-rd. There is no group of people, or leaders who are indispensable before the L-rd. Our usefulness is based on our necessary willingness. He may not open up the earth, nor smite any longer with plagues, but He wants us to know, neither His conditions, nor our submission are optional – they are required.*

(4) 18:20. The L-RD said to Aaron: you shall possess nothing in their country, and there shall be no portion for you in the midst of them; for I am your portion and your possession, in the midst of the children of Israel. *We are all pilgrims and strangers and He is our possession. Unless we understand true ownership, we will not use His resources for His purposes.*

Haftarah: I Sam. 11:14-12:22

(5) 12: 23. Far be it from me to sin against the L-RD by ceasing to pray for you. I will teach you the good and the righteous path. *The people were jumping the gun (David was not ready yet), but the L-rd allowed them a king, but His conditions did not change. In the wilderness, they wanted to change directions, here they wanted a boost to keep on the same direction – but the roots of rebellion were the same and so was the solution.*

(6) 12:24. Only fear the L-RD and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; for you see what power He deploys among you. *They had been forgiven and their king had been allowed, but they were not being allowed any permission to move away from obedience and slack off.*

Brit Chadashah: Acts 5:1-11

(7) 5:11. A great fear took hold of the entire assembly and of all those who heard these things. *This is one of the most disturbing stories in the Bible for me, until I understand the context. They wanted to disguise their disobedience as obedience, even when they were given the chance of repentance. A large*

community of strangers had to be fed and all were caused to make a sacrifice. They wanted the glory, but did not want to pay for it. Appearances do not matter, truth and honesty do.

Psalm 5

Jewish Hero: Samuel

L-rd's Table

Passages:

Is. 30:21. Your ears shall hear a voice behind them which says; behold the path, walk in it, for you shall go to the right and to the left.

Ps. 32:8. I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Prov. 1:20-23. Wisdom cries out in the streets and lifts up her voice in the public places. She cries out at the entrance to noisy places, at the gates of the city and makes her words to be heard. How long, ignorant ones will you love ignorance? How long will those who mock take pleasure in mocking? And foolish ones will you hate wisdom? Turn and listen to my reprimands and behold I will pour upon you of my Spirit and I will make you to know my words.

Romans 2: 14-16. When the gentiles, who do not have the Law do naturally that which the Law prescribes, they are, who do not have the Law, a Law unto themselves. They show that the Law is written in their heart, their conscience gives testimony to this, and their thoughts alternatively accusing and defending them, each in their turn. This is what will be made manifest in the day, when according to my Gospel, G-d will judge by Jesus Christ the secret actions of men.

Micah 6:8. It has been made know unto you, o man that which is good and that which the L-RD asks of you: that you would practice righteousness, that you would love mercy and that you would walk humbly with your G-d.

When the Bible says that we are made in the image of G-d, it does not mean that G-d bears any **physical resemblance** to any of us or that any of us are the **physical manifestation** of G-d. It means that we possess a moral image and that we have a **conscience, in the place of instinct**. We still do a number of things by instinct and there is nothing deficient about our DNA, but over and above the physical attributes which we share with the members of the animal and plant kingdoms, we alone have a **unique feature** and it is more than just a superior intelligence – it is a conscience, which functions both to help us bring order to our lives by the **choices we make**, or disorder to the same life, by the **choices we don't make**.

It also functions to tell us that we should not always do what we feel like doing or what we can get away with, just because we can, but it lifts us out of the situation and allows us to add another dimension- that of conscience, **where what we do is based on our choices, rather than just on our impulses**. This is not always an easy voice to hear or an easy choice to make, because we live in a world which is so stimulating and which has so focused an agenda (drives, desires) – and also because our flesh and our adversary are also competing for our attention.

One of the most precious possessions we have is not our strength, nor our intelligence, nor even our wealth or our position – it is our **conscience**, which many modern authorities would have you view as an enemy with a moral agenda which is not fair or not reasonable and as we wander through this life on our pilgrimage and as we store up treasures in our hearts for our final exam, we have to **make peace with this inner voice** and learn to listen to its **authentic voice** and not be taken in by other voices which also want our attention and which claim to be the authentic voice of our souls.

Learning to recognize His voice in our hearts is not a complicated procedure if we understand three things.

First all of us are born with a conscience and **it is the successful development of its potential which**

will determine our real success or our failure. Secondly, we need to understand that our desires (flesh) also wishes to guide our lives and **will often try very hard to appear to be the inner voice** which we should follow, so we have to be **careful of appearances** and weigh the influences which try to motivate us to action.

Lastly, we need to understand that **morality** and **condemnation** are not always very closely associated and we need to beware of the false morality of the flesh, the world and the enemy. Here is how they work. Our needs and our feelings tell us what we **need** and what we **feel**, but do not tell us what we **should do** or what we really need to walk with the King and in every situation, we need to be aware that we do not walk by our guts, or our instincts, but by **an inner voice which will speak if we learn to listen.**

It is not the voice of the crowd or of the infomercial and it is not the voice of those physical needs which our body and our metabolism have. **It is the voice which G-d built into our beings as a kind of spiritual instinct** and it is only as we get good at listening to it that we will be able to discern the voice of G-d, when He uses it to get our attention and to prepare us to be taken further along in our journey to know Him and to walk with Him.

Let's look at our conscience and free it from all the bad press it has been getting. **Our conscience does not operate in opposition to our needs or even in opposition to our desires and hopes and plans**, it needs to be seen as an **essential step** in all and every decision we make, because we cannot just run on impulse and on instinct like the animals that do not possess this special capacity. In other words, we possess a **special gift** and as such have a **special calling** which the members of the animal kingdom do not have to contend with. We will always receive to levels of stimuli whenever we are confronted by as situation which involves a choice or even a reaction. We will have a **physical sensation** and we will also have a **spiritual one**. This spiritual one will always have at least two or five parts, depending on how we have learned to listen and how we have learned to digest the influences which surround us in this world (Gen. 4:7; I John 2:15, 16).

We will get a **physical stimulus** (accompanied by memories and similar triggers, the older we get) and we will get the call of the **voice of our spirit**, often in the form of a question, followed by a direction to go in, to obtain further information/direction. This is the first two, here comes the other three. This voice will be accompanied by the voice of our **fleshly nature**, which will challenge this initial perspective (has G-d really said, and other versions of the same challenge to spiritual authority), aided often by the voice of **the world** and **the enemy**.

When this happens, whatever tries to tempt us to do what we know is wrong, or what we are unsure about is not the voice of G-d in our hearts. Whatever tries to condemn us or attacks us as useless (hopeless) junk, incapable of morality, is also not the voice of G-d. As well, that which also tries to confuse us into thinking that our feelings and other physical, **non spiritual sensations and drives** are the righteous ones we should follow, and not the drives of our inner man, is not the voice of G-d.

In the past I have taught you that the enemy has **three categories** of attack against our spiritual inner man: he **tempts**, he **condemns** and he **confuses**, because he wants to wean us away from the **inner man**, so that we gag the voice of the image of G-d in our hearts and become convinced that another voice is the one we should listen to. Cries of "what is wrong with it anyway" and "look how good it looks and how good it feels", join hands with fear and anger to bully us into attacking this inner part of us until it is silenced and **we feel somehow liberated from that part of us which most truly reflects the image of G-d –our conscience.**

How do we take back the ground we have lost? It will not be easy, because we have to learn three things and I will close with this. **First** we have to take back the **spiritual reflex** which always wants to ask us to consider what is right, or good or merciful and acknowledge that **until we have personally gone through this level of response, we have not reacted spiritually**, no matter what we decide.

Secondly we have to acknowledge the amount of **negative propaganda** – spiritual fool's gold, which wants to influence us away from our deep inner voice and prevent us from looking at our world in terms of good and bad, acceptable and not acceptable – but in terms of what feels good, or gives us satisfaction or makes us more comfortable, or what is popular or prevalent. This is the negative dimension of false carnal spirituality which Israel struggled with from the beginning of her walk with the Lord and which our Torah portion contended with in the early stages of the camp of Israel and which is the roots of both **idolatry** and **fornication** at a personal level as well as at a social or national (international) level.

The deepest drive needs to be our first drive, and not the **secondary propaganda** which comes to us always with the:” Yes, but” approach. An overactive conscience is an attempt to turn us against this inner voice and silence its influence in our lives.

Lastly we need to learn to **feed our inner voice**, by taking it to that source of His voice, the Bible, where we will recognize this same voice in our hearts and strengthen its ability to be heard in our lives as we wander through this life on our way to our Father's home in glory.

It will not always be easy and sometimes we will be wrong, but with that rogue politician who was more wrong than he was right (talking about Churchill here), we need to strive to **never be on the side of wrong**. I do not know how often I encounter judgmentalism and bullying that wants to force people to listen to first to a secondary voice and not be guided first by the inner voice.

It goes like this – instead of asking us what we think or discern, it requires immediate compliance and makes us doubt our own ability to see what is right and wrong, apart from a constant barrage of outside information – which is just another version of the **ugly trio** (the flesh, the world and the enemy) and you can tell when its influence is rampant – **because the works of the flesh rush in to spoil any good we could be doing for the L-rd.**

Which voice are you listening to? Are you able to **recognize** His voice which he planted in you at conception?

This is the voice which his Spirit will use and work through, so that your heart becomes a garden for his spiritual fruit and not a weed patch for the works of the flesh.

Are you in the habit of letting this part of you **speak** when you make decisions? The questions your spiritual man asks are the key to the answers G-d wants to give you and guide you by and which His word contains the answers for.

Do you understand that other voices will try and make **you listen first to things which you do not hear first**, and to questions whose answers will lead you to question G-d and not to listen to what is good, right and merciful?

We will always have to fight this **personal battle with influences**, but as we get better at discerning both our inner voice and the voice of His Word, then His voice will be easier to listen to and instead of rising up like Korah and the rebels to build a golden calf and return to Egypt, we will learn to trust His voice in us and

be guided by our spiritual instinct and not by the carnal ones which roar around the edge of our camp as we continue our pilgrimage through this life.

Are you learning to listen to His voice in your heart? Let's pray